

Arabs have reservations regarding Euro-Mediterranean security pact

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab countries have reservations over a French proposal for a Euro-Mediterranean "stability pact" on the agenda of a mid-April conference in Malta, because it would include Israel.

The project is aimed at forging security cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Mediterranean countries, including Israel and its Arab neighbours. Arab diplomats here said.

It is based on a broader concept of security to include the exchange of information and military experts, cooperation in the fight against organised crime and terrorism, arms limitations and human rights, they said.

Earlier this month Arab countries decided to freeze the normalisation of ties with Israel and enforce an Arab boycott of the Jewish state, as a result of starting the construction of a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

Arab countries accuse Israel of dragging its feet in the Middle East peace process and refusing to implement agreements that were struck with the Palestinians.

As a result they prefer to hold out on any security or stability pact that would top the agenda of the second Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Conference April 15-16 in Malta.

"Military cooperation is part of the measures of confidence building stipulated by this security pact and it is difficult now to adopt it," said Fathi Shazli, an assistant to the Egyptian foreign minister for European affairs.

"The Arabs unanimously believe that it is premature to speak of constraining measures and to fix a date for their implementation," Mr. Shazli said, referring to the terms of the French proposal.

"It is out of the question to set up confidence-building measures of a military nature with other countries, including Israel, as long as Israel continues to occupy Arab land and ignores Arab rights," he added.

Mr. Shazli said he hoped that this point will be cleared up with the Europeans in Malta, adding that nothing, however, prevented the meeting from adopting a blueprint for a future pact.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which groups the 15 EU member states and 12 countries along the southern Mediterranean basin, is aimed at developing security, political, economic, cultural and social ties.

Europe's partners are Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Turkey and the Palestinian National Authority.

The first Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Conference was held in Barcelona, Spain, in November 1995, paving the way for "several confidence-building measures," according to Mr. Shazli.

"A network of contacts was set up to facilitate communication between the capitals and the European Commission as well as bilateral exchanges," Mr. Shazli said. The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

"We also reached a draft agreement for a system to prevent natural catastrophes, and we hope it will be adopted in Malta," he added.

Mr. Shazli stressed that Egypt and the other Arab countries were not planning to discuss the peace process in Malta. "But it is clear that the mood which prevailed in Barcelona has radically changed," he said.

The Arabs have appealed to Europe to help push forward the peace process with Israel.

MBC plans telethon to raise funds for Jerusalem, highlight situation

By Sa'd Silawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The London-based Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) will launch a 12-hour telethon under the theme "Jerusalem Appeal" on Friday, April 11 to raise funds for Jerusalem.

Senior Jordanian figures representing the political, economic and intellectual spectrum will be launching appeals to raise an amount ranging between \$10 and \$20 million to aid the Palestinian people and to enable them to hold in the face of the Israeli racial campaign aimed at obliterating the Arab identity of Jerusalem.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi, former Prime Minister Taher Masri, Senate member Abdul Majid Shouman, Secretary of the Palestinian Studies Institution Walid Al Khalidi, and former Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif will make televised statements, urging the public to donate funds to Jerusalem.

The telethon, which starts at 12:00 GMT, includes interviews with figures from all walks of life and national songs in addition to scenes depicting the events in Jerusalem.

Interviews with renowned figures from Cairo, Washington and Jerusalem, in addition to other Arab and Islamic capitals, will also be transmitted live on MBC Satellite from London and Jerusalem.

In addition to raising funds to support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, the telethon seeks to draw attention to the dangers threatening Jerusalem and its Arab identity.

The MBC's daily "Good Evening Arabs" programme will be dedicated on April 9 and 10 for announcing the telethon. It will broadcast interviews and footage on the situation in Jerusalem.



HEBRON CLASHES: A Palestinian security man tries to stop stone throwing at Israeli policemen and army soldiers during fierce clashes with Palestinians on Tuesday following an incident in the centre of the Jewish controlled part of the city where a Palestinian was shot dead by a Jewish settler. Two Palestinians were killed when rubber-coated bullets shot by Israeli security forces penetrated their brain. Hospital officials in Hebron say scores of Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets (Reuters photo)

Germany to try 'most wanted' human smuggler

BADEN-BADEN (AP) — A Turk described as Europe's most-wanted people smuggler has been arrested in Croatia and was being extradited to Germany for trial, prosecutors said Monday.

Muhs Pinarbisi, 46, wanted in connection with the smuggling of at least 90,000 Kurds into Germany, was handed over to the German border police late Monday, said Michael Klose, spokesman for the Baden-Baden prosecutor's office.

Mr. Pinarbisi, who faces up to five years in prison if convicted, has been sought for seven years by prosecutors throughout Germany, but the Baden-Baden office will take over the whole case, said Mr. Klose.

He said Mr. Pinarbisi and a gang he allegedly leads are suspected of bringing thousands of illegal immigrants across the German border, and described him as Europe's most-wanted people smuggler.

The growing numbers of would-be migrants smuggled across Europe's borders have slowed the European Union (EU) plans to drop passport checks and other controls on its internal borders.

Mr. Klose said that Mr. Pinarbisi was arrested last September along the Croatia-Slovenia border and that a judge in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, had approved his extradition.

Mr. Klose said that as soon as Mr. Pinarbisi arrived in Germany he was to be brought before a magistrate who could order him kept in custody. The preliminary proceedings would be accelerated, Mr. Klose said, so that trial can begin within six months.

Lebanon grilled on human rights

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Lebanon on Monday faced a barrage of questions concerning alleged human rights abuses and the extent of Syrian influence in the country at a human rights forum here.

During a human rights committee session, which is separate from the U.N. Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) currently meeting in Geneva, international experts asked Lebanese Foreign Ministry official Nabil

Maamari about prison conditions and the extradition of 219 Lebanese to Syria.

Ecuadoran expert Julio Prado Vallejo specifically asked whether the extradition of the Lebanese detainees to Syria had taken place under pressure from Damascus.

He pointed out that Beirut could not renounce its sovereign duty to ensure the rights of its citizens to a fair trial in their own country.

Delegates also expressed concern about the expanded powers of military courts, and reports of torture and of human rights abuses in parts of Lebanon where 35,000 Syrian

forces are deployed.

Other experts complained that the Lebanese government's report to the committee session — which was due in 1988 and only submitted last year — was late, short and contained insufficient information concerning the human rights situation in Lebanon.

Mr. Maamari responded that he had no information on the issue of Lebanese extradited to Syria, and no knowledge of alleged human rights violations by Syrian forces in Lebanon.

The UNHRC is currently in session until the end of the week focusing on implementation of obligations under the international covenant of civil and political rights.

In addition to Lebanon, submitting only its second report since 1983, the committee is examining periodic reports by Bolivia, Colombia and Portugal as well as the first report to the experts from 18 countries submitted by Georgia.

Turks pay homage to 'Grey Wolves' leader

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's political establishment on Tuesday paid homage at a funeral service for far-right leader Alparslan Turkes whose nationalist influence far outweighed his popular support.

Hundreds of members of parliament from across the political divide stood to attention in front of Turkes' coffin for a minute's silence in the courtyard of parliament.

Outside, tens of thousands of mourners chanting nationalist slogans and carrying red-and-white Turkish flags blocked one of the capital's arteries.

Turkes followers, known as "Grey Wolves," were involved in street fighting between rightists and leftists in the late 1970s in which more than 5,000

people were killed. The violence helped prompt the army to launch its third coup in as many decades.

Turkes, known as "Basbug" (chieftain), died of a heart attack on Saturday.

Born in 1917 in Nicosia, Cyprus, he was the veteran head of the Nationalist Action Party which campaigned to unite all Turkish peoples from the Balkans through Turkey to Central Asia.

"Our pain is great. There is no one like him," said supporter Adem Erol.

Turkes' party remains a powerful influence in Turkish public life despite failing in 1995 to win the 10 per cent of the vote needed to capture any seats in parliament under the election laws.

Larger conservative par-

ties have taken on many of his nationalist ideas over the years. Many members of the powerful security forces are Grey Wolf sympathisers.

President Suleyman Demirel, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and political party leaders were expected to attend a religious service for Turkes at Ankara's main Kocatepe Mosque later in the day.

Police shut roads in central Ankara in anticipation of tens of thousands of mourners.

Buses carrying nationalists from all over the country as well as Turkish communities in Cyprus and the Balkans have been arriving in Ankara over the last few days for the funeral, to be broadcast live on several television channels.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three Israeli soldiers to be tried

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Three Israeli soldiers from the elite Givati Brigade are to be tried for beating two Palestinians who snuck out of the self-rule Gaza Strip into Israel, military officials said Tuesday. The two Palestinians, Yehiyeh Daouna, 35, and Bashir Baabid, 36, from the Nusseirat refugee camp in Gaza, were arrested several weeks ago after they illegally entered the Jewish state. The Palestinians said the soldiers blindfolded them and forced them to lay face down in their army jeep and made them sing songs about Givati and Golani, another elite Israeli military unit. The men said they were kicked and struck with rifles and cellular phones if they refused to sing. An Israeli military doctor confirmed the wounds on the Palestinians, with one requiring three days in hospital, and both were returned to Gaza, officials said. The senior Israeli military officer who wrote the report on the incident described it as "very serious" and said the soldiers should be tried. The proceedings are to begin in the next few days.

2 UAE rapists sentenced to death

DUBAI (AFP) — Two United Arab Emirates men have been sentenced to death for the brutal rape and murder of an eight-year-old Pakistani girl kidnapped while playing outside her home, the justice ministry said Tuesday. Ahmad Mohammad Amin Badaow, 21, and Mohammad Abdallah Abdul Aziz, 22, were sentenced to death by a court here Monday for the October 1996 rape and murder of the girl, the justice ministry said, adding that the two could appeal. They were convicted of forcing the girl into their car while she was playing in front of her house in the northeastern city of Khor Fakkan. The pair carefully planned the crime, having rented a car and surveyed the area where the girl often played, police said. They took the girl to an isolated area, tied her up and raped her repeatedly before abandoning her. The two men then went to a hotel and got drunk, boasting their crime, police said. The girl died several days later. Badaow and Aziz were arrested six months later after an intensive police investigation.

Mad cow wreaks havoc in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — A cow being slaughtered in front of a butcher shop in Tehran

broke free and went on a rampage, damaging shops and injuring several people, before being shot dead by police, a newspaper reported Tuesday. The butcher had only made a small cut in the throat of the enormous cow, which was lying on the ground with its legs tied, before it managed to free itself, the daily Iran said. The hysterical animal first attacked the butcher and then several shops and passers-by in the poor southern district of Yafabad, the paper added. Panic-stricken residents sought help from the police, who after obtaining permission from a judge, shot the cow dead in a fruit and vegetable store. Several people suffered injuries and shops were damaged, the paper said. Although livestock are increasingly butchered in slaughterhouses in big cities, some people still prefer to do it themselves.

Arab-Jewish kindergarten opens

WEST JERUSALEM (AFP) — The first kindergarten for Arab and Jewish children was officially opened Monday at a Christian-run centre in West Jerusalem. Twenty-eight children from both faiths were registered at the kindergarten, where activities will be held in the Arabic and Hebrew languages, officials said. Of the Arab children, only one is Palestinian; the others come from Arab Israeli families that live in West Jerusalem. The kindergarten, inaugurated in the presence of former mayor Teddy Kolek, is sited at a centre run by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Another is planned for next year.

UNIKOM mission to continue

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council has agreed to maintain a U.N. observer mission along the Iraq-Kuwait border, in line with a recommendation by U.N. chief Kofi Annan. In a letter to Mr. Annan released Tuesday, U.N. Security Council President Antonio Monteiro of Portugal said that the 15 Security Council members agreed on the need to maintain the 1,600-strong force known as UNIKOM. Mr. Annan said that the mission had enabled "calm and stability" to prevail along the border since its creation in April 1991, following the Gulf war which rolled back the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Mr. Monteiro said the council would review the issue again in six months' time.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05Flintstones
14:30Cartoon — Adventures of the Rainbow Pond
15:00French Programmes
16:00America's Funniest People
16:25Escape from Jupiter
16:50Doc. — Challenge
17:15Border Town
18:00French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00Children's Diary
20:30Challenges
21:10Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00News in English
22:25Cobra
23:00Hart to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:51Fajr
06:10(Sunrise)Duba
12:37Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:04Maghreb
20:24Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632783.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Santa Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775361.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Annam International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latino Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology:
Cold and cloudy to partly cloudy weather conditions will prevail with rainfall expected at intervals and winds westerly active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds southerly active, and seas rough.

Amman05/11
Aqaba11/22
Deserts04/13
Jordan Valley09/18
Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 16. Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 53 per cent. Aqaba 50 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
Dr. Hanna Mansour750197
Dr. Afif Shukri89863
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh827195
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq788285
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy890280
Al Asena pharmacy637055
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairookh pharmacy623672
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qana884786
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Raif Atallah994434
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queeo Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 818613/32
Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir,775111/26
Army, Marks891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery .865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
8:00Damascus (RJ)
08:35Larnaka (RJ)
09:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05Aqaba (add) (RJ)
17:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:40 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
18:05Istanbul (RJ)
19:00Brussels, Paris (RJ)
29:10London, Berlin (RJ)
19:20Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:40Paris, Rome (RJ)
20:40Rome, Vienna (RJ)
00:10Beirut (RJ)
02:05Cairo (RJ)
04:00Jeddah (RJ)
04:55 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
Other Flights
09:15Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:00Sanaa, Hudaidah (Y)
12:00Jeddah (SV)

12:55Bucharest (RO)
13:10 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:30Tunis (TU)
16:20Algiers (AH)
17:00Doha (Q7)
19:00London (GA)
19:30Istanbul, Damascus (PK)
20:40London (BA)
21:10Beirut (ME)
21:10Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:30Tel Aviv (LY)
23:20Istanbul (TK)
23:25Amsterdam (KL)
00:25Ankara (PK)
00:25Athens (OA)
04:00Athens (OA)
06:15Istanbul (TK)

DEPARTURES

06:15Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:30Rome (RJ)
11:45Berlin, London (RJ)
12:40Casablanca (RJ)
12:45Istanbul (RJ)
20:25Beirut (RJ)
21:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:10Colombo (RJ)
21:15New Delhi (RJ)
21:45Calcutta, Bombay (RJ)
21:50Bombay (RJ)
22:05Bombay, Muscat (RJ)
22:15Cairo (RJ)
23:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:40Sanaa (RJ)
01:40Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:50Larnaka (CY)
08:45Beirut (ME)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple700/500
Banana600/600
Banana (imported)1000/600
Cabbage130/80
Carrot180/100
Cauliflower190/100
Cucumber (large)180/100
Cucumber (small)300/180
Eggplant220/120
Fava beans450/250
Garlic1600/1100
Grape fruit200/100
Lemon550/300
Marrow (large)200/120
Marrow (small)300/200
Onion (green)240/120
Onion (dry)480/300
Orange500/300
Peas650/500
Pepper (hot)650/400

Princess addresses roundtable devoted to women's political, social enfranchisement

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Tuesday attributed inequality between the sexes to obsolete social practices dating back to the era before Islam and perpetuated by legal, political, social and cultural mores currently prevailing in the Arab World as elsewhere.

Noting that both the Holy Koran and the sayings of the Prophet emphasise women's rights and women's status in Islamic societies, Princess Basma affirmed need to adhere to these teachings and cultural values, while striving to enhance women's societal status so that they might achieve equality and contribute to peace and development.

The Princess was addressing the opening session of a three-day international roundtable meeting entitled: "Equal Opportunities for Women: A Question of Rights and Humanity" held at the Forte Grand Hotel and attended by delegates from 18 countries.

The process of change and the attainment of equality must be conducted gradually and characterised by vigilance and awareness, Princess Basma maintained.

"In Jordan, we are working on six

inter-related areas of national priority: the legal, political, social, economic, health and educational domains. We are working with men and women within the public and private sector towards changing legislation. At the same time, we are encouraging the full participation of women's non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups at the grassroots level," she added.

"Through the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW), the highest policy-making body in the country concerning women, we have been successful in making amendments to some laws and regulations, such as the Labour Law, the Civil Service Regulation and the Civil Status and Passports Regulation," the Princess noted.

Lauding the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups, Princess Basma described these as active in disseminating awareness among Jordanian women and encouraged women to play active roles in their respective local communities where efforts are underway towards the creation of women-oriented committees.

"We must encourage women's

economic participation alongside her participation in the political domain. Creating opportunities for a woman to improve her family income is just one of the many steps involved in strengthening her voice, her confidence and decision-making potential," the Princess emphasised.

This is a constant and long-term process aimed at developing the appropriate social and cultural infrastructure to aid women in exercising their rights, she added.

Addressing the meeting's participants, the Princess concluded: "I am sure we will find, in our discussions over the next few days, many areas of commonality. Although we come from different countries, we face many similar obstacles to our efforts. These often stem from a resistance to change on the part of both men and women."

Also addressing the meeting was Julia Hausermann, president of the International Movement for Rights and Humanity, which organised the meeting in conjunction with the JNCW.

She said that the meeting aimed at discussing the most appropriate methods and means for enhancing

and supporting women's rights, guaranteeing equal opportunities and upgrading women's status in society.

She commended Princess Basma's endeavours in the women's movement and lauded Jordan's "pioneering role" in "supporting women's role in political life as a way to achieve equality."

JNCW Secretary General Hiyam Kalamat also addressed the meeting, welcoming delegates and reiterating that the committee, under the chairmanship of Princess Basma, has contributed towards the improvement of Jordanian women's status.

Several reports, reviewed by the delegates, cover women's social and humanitarian rights, harnessing women's chances for equality through legislation and laws, ways to increase women's political activities and influencing society to help enfranchise women.

The participants include intellectuals, experts in women-related affairs, proponents of and supporters of women's rights, representatives of research centres and former parliamentarians worldwide.



Kamleh Hassan Ahmad, mother of the Jordanian soldier Ahmed Dakamseh, who killed seven Israeli girls at Baqoura on March 13, Tuesday demonstrates to reporters as to how the victims reportedly provoked her son with signs of cynicism during his prayers (AFP photo)

Mother of Dakamseh pleads for 'fair and just treatment'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The mother of a Jordanian soldier, who last month shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls, pleaded for a fair trial for her son and called on the government to ease a month-long blockade on their village.

"We want a fair and just treatment for our son," said Kamleh Hassan Ahmad, 62, mother of Ahmed Dakamseh.

Mr. Dakamseh is currently being detained in Army Headquarters for killing seven Israeli schoolchildren and injuring five others in Baqoura, 150 kilometres north of Amman.

"Our village is still under heavy security and nobody has been permitted to visit us or [enter] the area," Ms. Dakamseh said in a press conference at the Professional Unions Association on Tuesday.

"We want the government to treat us like humans and stop the security officers' harassment," she added.

She described heavy security arrangements are imposed on the village and that all roads leading to the village, both have been blocked with non-residents not permitted to visit.

"We call upon human right organisations and the media to come to the village and

see with their own eyes how the security officers are treating us," she said.

Ms. Dakamseh confirmed that during a 20-minute visit with her son, he was calm and that there was no indication that he had been maltreated during his detention.

"I did not see any trace of torture on his face or body. He told me not to cry and was inquiring about his ill father," she said.

She told reporters that her son displayed neither sorrow nor regret.

Ahmad Najdawi, Mr. Dakamseh's attorney who visited his client on a separate occasion, said that a military panel was expected to conclude the charge list late this month and hinted that the trial of the 28-year-old soldier might start at that time.

Mr. Najdawi called on the government to hold a public trial.

"This case requires a public trial," he stated in the same press conference. "It would be a mistake and illegal to resort to a secret trial."

Meanwhile, a six-person army team visited Israel on Monday to investigate the shooting.

Israeli media described the team, headed by General Ahmad Musa and including, among others, Brigadier Mansour Abu Rashid, as aimed at "collecting evidence from the victims and security from last month's incident."

Former Yugoslavia to import Kingdom's phosphate as debt payment — official

AMMAN (Petra) — The head of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's mission to Jordan Oliver Potetiza Tuesday maintained that his country plans to import 800,000 tonnes of Jordanian phosphate as part of settling an estimated \$30 million debt to Belgrade.

Mr. Potetiza described his country as willing to construct factories and implement other economic ventures in a bid to strengthen Yugoslavian-Jordanian relations.

Yugoslavia has maintained strong economic ties with Jordan since 1952 when it was the first country to import phosphate from the Kingdom, he said.

Jordanian-Yugoslavian talks are underway to reach an agreement, to be signed this year, to cover Yugoslavian exports of industrial equipment at rates below those on the global market, Mr. Potetiza affirmed.

Some of Jordan's debts to his country, he said, would be paid in cash with the rest tallied through trading phosphate and other goods with those of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Potetiza also confirmed that Jordan and Yugoslavia have reached tentative agreement on implementing joint pharmaceutical plants to manufacture children's medicine both to be sold in Jordan and exported internationally at competitive prices.

Among the items which Yugoslavia can import from Jordan, he said, are at least four billion different types of medical capsules manufactured in Jordan.

A delegation from Yugoslavia will arrive here soon to sign a deal with Jordanian pharmaceutical firms to produce these capsules as well as other drugs and vaccines, Mr. Potetiza stated.

He explained that Yugoslavia is ready to exchange medical expertise with Jordan and cooperate in mineral water therapeutic treatment with the participation of health spas in the two countries.

'Car combustion unrelated to soldier's investigation'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A fire, which burned the car of the son of the general investigating the shooting of Israeli schoolchildren by a Jordanian soldier last month, was caused by a short circuit and no sabotage was intended, official sources said Tuesday.

The fire, which occurred at 3:30 a.m. in Jabal Weibdeh, engulfed only the car's engine, the official source confirmed.

No injuries were reported. The car, a Mercedes-Benz, belonged to the son of Mohammad Rasoul Kilani, Abdul Rahman.

"Fire investigators determined that a short circuit occurred in the car's battery and that it engulfed the vehicle's engine," the official

source said.

Mr. Kilani, a retired army general, is the chief investigator in the case of Corporal Ahmed Dakamseh, an army soldier, who killed seven Israeli students on March 13 in the Baqoura area on the Jordanian-Israeli border.

Five other students were injured in the attack.

Cpl. Dakamseh, 28, a father of three, who was arrested immediately after the attack, told investigators that he committed the shooting out of a sense of national duty and to protect his military honour and national dignity after being provoked by the Israeli girls while he was praying. R. H.

Party condemns Jewish settlement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Christian Arab Democratic Party (CADP) this week described Israeli plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem as well as its drive to perpetuate the occupation of Arab lands as a "flagrant defiance of both international law and U.N. Security Council resolutions on Palestine."

"This policy is an offence to the Palestinian people as well as a disregard of criticism of such policy as expressed by the world's nations, including the U.S., something which displays

Israel's intention of exacerbating the situation and ruining the peace process," according to the statement, signed by the party's Secretary General Sami Siwady.

"As Palestinian Arabs — Muslims and Christians alike — we stand united in our demand that Israel immediately halt these arbitrary and inhumane measures and demand that the global community pressure the Israeli government to promptly end illegal practices. We demand that Israel implement U.N. Security Council resolutions and respect

international law," the statement continued.

It maintained that Israel should be compelled to conform to international law as do all other countries in the region, otherwise, it said, the whole peace process will be jeopardised.

Addressing the Israeli society, the statement said "if you wish to peacefully co-exist with us, you must respect your neighbours rather than commit atrocities against them and you must respect international Legitimacy and the Arab people's human rights."

Students, accused of plans to attack Israeli embassy, released on bail

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Seven high school students, out of a group of nine, who were arrested last week by security forces on charges of attempting to attack the Israeli embassy in Amman, were Tuesday released on bail, family members said.

The seven students were each released on a JD 5,000 administrative bail, according to Sa'ed Kayed, attorney and father of Abdul Rahman, who was detained by security forces.

The nine students, all tenth and eleventh graders from the Arab Modern School, were arrested for questioning last Wednesday on suspicion of forming an organised group, plotting to attack the Israeli embassy and distributing "dangerous" pamphlets in Amman and Irbid.

"We were questioned by

authorities as to our motives and intentions, and when they were satisfied that we intended no harm, they released us," said Abdul Rahman Kayed, 16.

Initial reports had indicated that 11 to 14 students had been arrested.

According to the students' families, the authorities arrested the youths shortly after the arrest of three students who reportedly approached the Israeli embassy in Amman, carrying tyres and kerosene.

"We had burnt tyres three weeks prior to the incident in front of the Israeli embassy, said Abdul Rahman Kayed. "Our actions were not intended to harm anyone, but rather to express our disapproval and anger over recent events in the West Bank."

He also stated that they did, indeed, distribute pamphlets against Israel and the peace process.

"It is our democratic right to express our feelings and that is what we did," said Abdul Rahman.

He denied any connection with a recent attack on an Israeli embassy car in the Sweifeh neighbourhood of Amman.

"We had nothing to do with this attack and we have no idea as to who might have done it," he told the Jordan Times Tuesday.

The diplomatic car, which was parked beside the ambassador's residence, had its windows broken and its tyres punctured. Police ruled out theft as a motive.

The remaining two students who are still being detained for further questioning, according to Abdul Rahman Kayed, are Imad Adileh and Yazeed Abu Toq.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Tuesday evening declined comment.

'Abu Khajil expected to be freed on bail today'

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The former Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka Tawfiq Abu Khajil, accused of involvement in a baby trafficking scam, is expected to be freed on bail today, judicial sources and lawyers affirmed.

"We filed a request to free Mr. Abu Khajil on bail at the Court of Appeals, and we have received a positive response from the justices therein," Defence Attorney Ahmad Tbeishat said.

Judicial sources also affirmed Tuesday that the Court of Appeals is expected to formally accept Mr. Abu Khajil's request.

On Jan. 19 of this year, the Criminal Court granted a JD 100,000 bail to free the former honorary consul in consideration of health problems.

A week later, the Court of Appeals revoked the Criminal Court's ruling and ordered him detained.

Mr. Abu Khajil, a Jordanian businessman, is currently being tried at the Amman Criminal Court on charges of use and issuance of forged documents, issuance of false certificates, sale of babies (illegal under a 1929 law against slavery), possession of unlicensed firearms, theft, import of illegal wireless devices, abuse of trust and forgery of a government seal.

Two other women face the

same charges. They are Anourma G.L., who is accused of selling her baby, and Andrea Bustani. Mr. Abu Khajil's former secretary, who is being tried in absentia.

Mr. Abu Khajil was detained by authorities on March 13 of last year shortly after airport police stopped a Dutch couple from leaving the country with a baby they thought to have had adopted after paying a sum of \$8,000.

The couple were found to be carrying forged documents concerning the infant.

The former honorary consul is also being tried at the Criminal Court on charges of having raped several Sri Lankan women.

Four Sri Lankan women, whom the defendant was charged with having raped, were transferred to the Criminal Court for altering their testimonies in court and could face perjury charges.

In other developments in the case, the Criminal Court, where Mr. Abu Khajil is being tried on the rape charges, Tuesday postponed the case for May 6.

According to judicial sources, the court is awaiting the results of the criminal prosecutor's investigation of the four Sri Lankan women.

The Amman Criminal Court is expected to issue a verdict on the trafficking case and related charges on April 22.

NHF sponsors int'l children's book show

AMMAN (Petra) — The Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) is sponsoring an international children's book exhibition in conjunction with the Jordanian Publishers Federation and Al Bashir Publishing and Distribution House.

The exhibition is expected to open later this month.

NHF Executive Director Yasser Tal, stated that the exhibition, to be held from April 23-30, will include many Arab and international publishing houses, displaying a wide variety of books to be sold at a 25 per cent discount to encourage reading among children.

The exhibition, to be held at the International Expo Centre

in Amman, will help contribute to national efforts of providing cultural material for the children of the Arab World, Mr. Tal maintained.

He expressed optimism that the exhibition would become an annual event in the Kingdom, he said.

Her Majesty Queen Noor is eager to support cultural activities directed towards children, Mr. Tal added.

He affirmed that the Queen, through NHF, has been consistently sponsoring activities to promote children's short stories, poems, plays and the presentation of prizes and certificates of merit for young writers.

The annual NHF sponsored Children's Congress, held over the past 16 years, increases children's grasp of culture and widens the scope of their knowledge about the Arab World, Mr. Tal stated.

It also promotes solidarity and cooperation among Arabs, he added.

According to Director of the International Expo Centre Radwan Daboul, the exhibition will have a special wing for Jordanian writers.

NHF official, Isam Zawawi, stated that auxiliary to the exhibition, plans have been drawn up for a number of workshops and seminars.

Council of Ministers to lessen custom fees on live sheep imports

AMMAN (Petra) — In a bid to deal with a meat shortage in local markets, the Council of Ministers Tuesday decided to lessen customs fees imposed on the importation of live sheep to be equitable with those charged on imported fresh meat.

A statement, following the regular cabinet meeting, maintained that the move was taken upon the recommendations of a special ministerial committee on food supplies.

It said that the decision would increase the amount of imported live sheep and also encourage local livestock breeders with a resultant decline in meat prices.

This decision will create jobs and increase the production of leather, wool and other materials, according to the statement.

An increase in imports of sheep will translate into the availability of meat at all times and at

lower cost than the fresh meat imports, it added.

The Cabinet will entrust the minister of Supply to control meat pricing and to participate in the process of meat imports whenever a shortage of meat in the local markets appears, the statement said.

The Council of Ministers also decided to allow the private sector to import different types of cereals but set a condition that importers must obtain a licence from the Ministry of Supply which will set appropriate dates for such imports.

In addition, the Cabinet decided to distribute

JD 23 million, collected by the state treasury from fees, fines, fuel revenues and other miscellaneous items, to the country's 298 municipal and 166 village councils to help carry out municipal services.

Jordan Times facsimile #696183

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What's Going On

PLAY

* "Sings and Transforms" Rites, marking International Women's Day, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

* "Time For a Story" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "The Dead-Sea Scrolls: The Greatest Hebrew Manuscript Discovery After Fifty Years" by Professor Geza Vermes at the World Affairs Council, Fourth Circle at 6:00 p.m. (Tel. 642706).

* "Background to Diplomacy The Political, Economic, and Media Revolutions as They

Relate to Diplomacy" by Professor Ralf Feltham at the Institute of Diplomacy, Sixth Circle at 5:30 p.m. (Tel. 861000).

* "The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Jordanian Society" (in English) by Dr. Gazi Al-Sawwa at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m. (Tel. 610858).

Loyalist troops say rebels repulsed near Zaire city

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (R) — Diehard members of Zaire's collapsing army said on Tuesday they had repulsed an attempt by rebels to seize the copper city of Lubumbashi, which was rocked by explosions and gunfire overnight.

"We have repulsed the enemy," said an officer from President Mobutu Sese Seko's Special Presidential Guard (DSP), the only part of the army which seems ready to put up a fight.

"The enemy has fled," said a DSP soldier at a checkpoint some five kilometres out of town towards the frontline.

Soldiers manning a roadblock said army units fought off rebels near Kipushi, 30 kilometres southwest of Lubumbashi.

"Everything is calm. We repulsed the enemy near Kipushi," one soldier said. There was no independent confirmation of this.

Nightwatchmen who had been guarding buildings said there were a few explosions in the direction of the airport, northeast of the city, around midnight.

A dozen DSP soldiers were blocking the road. Just behind them were growing crowds of townspeople, unanimous in their support for rebel leader Laurent Kabila.

Guerrillas trying to end Mobutu's 32-year rule have met little resistance since launching their armed campaign from Zaire's eastern

borderlands six months ago. Residents reported explosions overnight on approaches to Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city which is the next declared target of Kabila's rebels.

In the capital Kinshasa defence ministry sources said the DSP had been sent to push back rebels from Kipushi, on the Zaire border, reported to have fallen to rebels earlier.

It was not immediately clear if the heavy gunfire overnight was linked to the DSP's intervention.

The DSP has more weapons and is generally better disciplined than the rest of Zaire's ragged army that has distinguished itself in looting during the civil war but has put up little resistance against the rebels.

Its defined role is to protect Mobutu and vital national interests. As such it has been concentrated in northern Gbadolite where Mobutu has a preferred jungle palace, and in Shaba province, which produces copper wealth.

Lubumbashi is the capital of Zaire's mining industry that has financially underpinned Mobutu's hold on the vast Central African country.

Military sources said defence chief General Mabele Lieko Bokungo had long wanted to bring the DSP into the fighting following his appointment last December but had failed because of dis-

agreements with the unit's commander. There were few people on the streets of Lubumbashi on Tuesday morning after the overnight curfew ended at 6 a.m. and some soldiers milled about aimlessly.

International efforts to negotiate an end to the fighting



A little boy, separated from his parents as they fled across Eastern Zaire, on Monday waits for attention in a refugee camp along a stretch of road south of Kisangani. The United Nations is now working on a plan to repatriate the some 80,000 Rwandan refugees still remaining in Eastern Zaire (Reuters photo)

showed no sign of a breakthrough after a third day of talks on Monday between warring parties in South Africa.

Earlier on Monday a Zairean government army commander said the rebels were about 15 kilometres from the city.

In South Africa envoys from Kinshasa and those of rebel leader Kabila met through Monday with no tangible sign of any progress in the search for peace.

In Washington, the United States insisted it had no intention of intervening militarily in Zaire's civil war.

"The presence of the American military in Gabon, in Congo and on the seas is to be available for any kind of evacuation that should be necessary of American citizens and American government employees," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

Former Bangladeshi President Ershad admits adultery with MP

DHAKA (AFP) — Deposed Bangladeshi President Hussain Muhammad Ershad finally owned up to a much rumoured affair with an MP from his Jatiya Party in a newspaper interview published here Tuesday.

Ershad admitted he was romantically linked to Zeenat Hossain, the wife of opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party MP Mosharraf Hossain.

His confession came two weeks after he denied rumours that he had strayed from his wife for 14 years.

"The problem is complex (and) embarrassing, but I have made my stand known to Zeenat and now it is her turn to decide," he told the Bengali-language Sangbad newspaper.

He said he was "very weak" where this issue was concerned, adding "I am somehow stuck with this problem ... This problem has to be solved."

The affair came to a head some two weeks ago when at his 68th birthday party he handed the first slice of cake not to his wife, Raushan, but to his lover of 14-years, he said.

His wife walked out but eventually agreed to return to their home in the wealthy Gulshan district after Ershad spoke to her, although he added he had not gone to see her right away.

"The first few days I did not go to bring her (back). Then when I went she placed some conditions, to which I said 'look, you know our 14-year history ... then why such conditions,'" he was quoted as saying.

"At one stage, I told her, 'remember I am a man, if you exceed your limits you will lose your husband,'" Ershad said he understood that no relationship could continue in such a manner especially as Bangladesh's "morality factor" would not permit it.

Under Islamic law a man can have up to four wives, provide that the first wife agrees.

Ershad and Raushan have a son, Saad, and an adopted daughter, Jabeen.

S. Korea, U.S. hope for peace talks with starving N. Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea and the United States held out hope for peace talks with North Korea as experts predicted Tuesday the threat of mass starvation could force the Stalinist state to the negotiating table.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-Hyung told AFP that South Korea expected three-way talks including the United States to be held in New York, perhaps in mid- or late April.

"We would hope that they would ultimately accept our proposal for four-party talks (also including China)," he said. "It is not a matter of

being optimistic or pessimistic but we hope it will go further."

The four-party peace talks were proposed by U.S. President Bill Clinton and his South Korean counterpart, Kim Young-Sam, in April 1996 to hammer out a peace agreement replacing the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War. Sub Jae-Jean, a senior researcher at the state-financed Institute for National Unification, said "death by starvation, reported from remote regions, will spread slowly and widely across the nation."

"The situation will prompt the regime in Pyongyang to come out for talks with Washington and Seoul. Pyongyang is expected to accept the four-way talks to get more aid," the U.S. State Department said in Washington on Monday it hoped North Korea would agree "very soon" to hold historic peace talks with South Korea.

"Our hope, of course, is that the North Koreans will agree very soon to the four-party proposal themselves, and that those talks can be begun. That's our hope," department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

"The North Koreans indicated that they will be prepared soon to give the United States and the Republic of Korea a formal response to our joint briefing" in New York on March 5, he said.

At working-level talks in New York on Friday, North Korea proposed holding an assistant or deputy ministerial-level meeting between Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington at an early date in New York.

The South Korean ministry spokesman said Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-Ho was due to fly to Tokyo on Monday for a three-day visit

that would include updating Tokyo on developments towards peace talks and on the North's food situation.

U.S. and South Korean military leaders pledged a tight security alliance Tuesday to guard against any unexpected events threatening security on the tense Korean Peninsula, officials said.

Visiting General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, also discussed the North's military situation in talks with his South Korean counterpart, Yoon Yong-Nam, Yoon's spokesman said.

Spanish language goes under the microscope

ZACATECAS, Mexico (R) — The king and queen of Spain, two Nobel laureates and hundreds of experts assembled in this Mexican town on Monday to reassess the Spanish language after five centuries in the Americas.

In just five days, they aim to analyse, correct and celebrate a language that has become the primary tongue for 20 countries and, by the end of the century, an estimated 400 million people.

King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain, accompanied by Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, inaugurated the First International Conference of the Spanish Language, which will focus on its usage in the media.

Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the 1982 Nobel prize winner, stole the show, pointing to the complexity of the language he said was poised for a global future.

"Consider that the verb 'to pass' has 54 meanings while in the republic of Ecuador they have 105 names for the male sex organ," Garcia Marquez said.

"Things have so many names in so many languages that it is not easy knowing what to call any of it."

The novelist, a failed encyclopaedia salesman who sold 40 million copies of his 1967 masterpiece "One Hundred Years of Solitude," used "Magic Realism" made famous in his works to underline the language's lyricism and wit.

"How many times have we tried a cup of coffee that tastes of window, bread that tastes of a corner, a cherry that tastes of a kiss?" he asked.

Britain and the United States were once described as two countries separated by a common language. In Spanish, that can be multi-

plied tenfold as one country's harmless words for a fruit or insect can be another country's slap in the face.

And like any language, Spanish is under assault by poor usage in print, on the air or in the street. It is altered by foreign influences and whimsically made-up words.

If there was one conclusion reached on the first day, it was that the language had a bright future.

"We Spanish and Hispano-Americans are the owners and users of one of the four great languages of the near future, the others being English, Arabic and Chinese," said 1989 Nobel laureate Camilo Jose Cela of Spain.

Until the 16th century, Spanish was used only in one country in Europe but was spread throughout the new world by the Spanish conquest, started in 1492.

Spanish is also the second language in the United States, where it is often transformed into "Spanglish", a linguistic dance between Spanish and English that is common near the Mexican border and among immigrants in big cities.

U.S. President Bill Clinton once said that he expected future presidents would be all but required to speak Spanish.

"Thanks to its variations, Spanish continues to be a universal language," said Mexican 1990 Nobel laureate Octavio Paz, whose videotaped message from Mexico City was played to the audience. Poor health prevented him from travelling to the colonial mining town of Zacatecas.

Jazz wins music Pulitzer Prize for first time ever

NEW YORK (R) — Journalists whose subjects ranged from the war in Afghanistan to the fight against AIDS won Pulitzer prizes Monday and for the first time in 80 years the awards paid homage to a working jazz musician.

Trumpet virtuoso Wynton Marsalis, 35, won the prize for music for his three-hour oratorio with jazz orchestra, "Blood on the Fields," a tale of an African king thrown into slavery.

It was the first time a work of jazz and blues music won the award.

No award was given for drama for the first time since 1986, although the drama committee recommended three plays, and no awards were given for stories connected to the 1996 presidential election.

The Pulitzer board said no candidates for the drama prize met its standards. It was the 14th time since 1917 that no drama award was given.

An American raised in Ireland, Frank McCourt, won the prize for biography for "Angela's Ashes," a searing story of growing up poor, starving and sick in Limerick.

The memoir by the 66-year-

old retired New York City schoolteacher was praised for its memorable opening lines:

"When I look back at my childhood, I wonder how I managed to survive at all. It was, of course, a miserable childhood, the happy childhood is hardly worth your while. Worse than the ordinary miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood."

Novelist Steven Millhauser won the prize for fiction for "Martin Dressler," described as the decline and fall of one man's quest for the American dream.

The prizes in journalism, drama, letters and music are awarded annually on the recommendation of the Pulitzer Prize board at Columbia University.

The prize for general non-fiction went to "Ashes to Ashes: America's 100-year Cigarette War. The Public Health, and the Unabashed Triumph of Philip Morris," by Richard Kluger. The prize for history went to Jack Rakove for "Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution."

The prize for poetry went to Lisel Mueller for "Alive

Together: New and Selected Poems."

In the journalism awards, the spot news reporting prize was awarded to Newsday's staff in Melville, New York, for its coverage of the TWA Flight 800 crash and its aftermath.

The Wall Street Journal staff won for national reporting for its coverage of the struggle against AIDS. The paper broke the story that a cocktail of drugs was proving effective in controlling the virus that causes aids.

John F. Burns of the New York Times won for international reporting for a second time. The former Bosnia correspondent won this time for his reporting from Afghanistan, where the extreme Taliban fundamentalists took control.

The Times-Picayune of New Orleans won the Public Service Award for a series on threats to the world's supply of fish and for Walt Handelsman's editorial cartoons. The feature photography prize went to Alexander Zemlianichenko of the Associated Press for his photo of Russian President Boris Yeltsin dancing at a rock concert during his re-election campaign.

NEWS IN BRIEF

18 killed in Afghanistan blast

PESHAWAR (AFP) — Eighteen people were killed when dynamite stored in a house exploded in the eastern Afghan province of Kunar, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Tuesday. The explosion occurred in the home of a resident of the village of Sbenagal for use on road construction. AIP said, quoting a delayed message from across the border. The family was cooking food for guests when a spark from the fire caused the dynamite to explode on March 29, it said. Kunar is adjacent to the Ninghar province where an ammunition dump blast killed some 50 people on March 19.

Banker paid \$31m in a year in London

LONDON (AFP) — A Japanese-born merchant banker in London earned a staggering \$31 million last year, representing nearly \$85,000 a day, it was revealed Tuesday. Shigeru Myojin, known as "Sugar" to colleagues at Salomon Brothers, has been earning large sums for years, but for the first time his pay has been made public because he has become a director of the company. The head of proprietary trading and risk management at the U.S.-owned Merchant Bank in Central London was born in Nagoya, Japan, but has worked in the British capital all his adult life. At 47, he drives a Ferrari, has been known to ride a bicycle around the city and has sometimes been seen in Salomon's offices wearing a U.S. army helmet and wielding a baseball bat. His elevation to the board reportedly came after he had announced he was retiring from Salomon Brothers, following a year in which he was paid \$20 million.

'Pill stimulates libido in the elderly'

HAVANA (AFP) — A pill containing the active ingredients of a wild plant has been found to stimulate libido in the elderly, Cuba's National Information Agency (AIN) reported Monday. Two Cuban laboratories make the pill, which in clinical trials stimulated the libido of people living in homes for the elderly, AIN said. The pill — which also contains magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, iron and potassium — could be "a new dietary supplement," according to AIN.

Hong Kong high-rise fire kills seven

HONG KONG (AFP) — Fire raced through a Hong Kong high-rise apartment building Tuesday killing seven people, including two children, and injuring 28, officials said. The fire broke out on the sixth floor of the 18-storey building, one of 60 identical blocks in Lai Chi Kok, Western Kowloon. Many of the injured were said to be in serious condition. A government spokesman said the victims, two women, two girls and a man, died in hospital from burns. The 28 injured were all being treated in hospital. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

Canberra retreats from sex movie ban

CANBERRA (R) — Australia's Conservative government, stung by community outrage at parliament's recent abolition of a euthanasia law, Tuesday dropped a plan to ban sex movies on pay television and video tape. Attorney-General Daryl Williams said the government would ban movies that combined sex with violence, degradation or children, but the new policy failed to generally outlaw movies explicitly showing sex, as originally proposed. The original proposal sparked criticism that Canberra for the second time in a month wanted to limit individual freedom and impose the moral views of politicians. "Amazingly, commonsense prevailed," Fiona Paten, a spokeswoman for the Sex Video Industry, told reporters. Federal parliament last month struck down a pioneering territory law that allowed voluntary euthanasia, the world's first such law.

France flies home illegal Romanians

PARIS (R) — France deported some 30 Romanians who were illegal residents or had threatened public order, the interior ministry said on Tuesday. It said they were flown to Bucharest on Monday night on a plane chartered by the French government in the 40th such collective deportation of illegal immigrants in almost two years. The ministry said 23,855 illegal foreign residents had been sent home since the centre-right government took power 23 months ago, cracking down on illegal immigration.

Immunity demanded for sultan of Brunei

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Lawyers for the sultan of Brunei and his brother argued Monday for sovereign immunity from a lawsuit filed against them by a former beauty queen who alleged they sexually abused her. But attorneys for the onetime Miss USA, Shannon La Rhea Marketic, argued that sovereign immunity should not protect personal acts of Hajji Hassanali Bolikiah and his brother Hajji Jefri Bolikiah. U.S. District Judge Consuelo Marshall did not immediately rule on the arguments.

'Brown bagging' soars in workplace

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The number of meals brought from home to school or the workplace — known as "brown bagging" — has risen 48 per cent over the last decade, according to the consulting firm NPD Group, Inc. People most often brown-bag lunch, which increased 26 per cent, but the Illinois-based NPD — which surveys people about their eating habits — said breakfast has tripled since 1984 and dinner has doubled. Fifty-one per cent of all brown bag lunches have ham sandwiches, making that the top item on the menu. But frozen entrees are the fastest-growing item. "It's happening because people are working longer hours and companies are looking to eke out productivity," said John Challenger of Challenger Gray and Christmas, a national outplacement company.

Policeman gets 5 years for \$8.5 bribe

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An Indian police officer who demanded 300 rupees (\$8.5) to help a man get a passport has been sentenced to five-and-a-half years of hard labour, newspapers said Tuesday. Assistant sub-inspector Prem Raj Singh was handed the sentence by a court here on Monday, the statesman said. Singh was caught by his colleagues while accepting the money from Mohammad Israel Ansari.

Kenya judges divided on wearing wigs

NAIROBI (AFP) — Kenyan judges are divided over whether to continue wearing the traditional robe and wig inherited from the British colonial era, with some saying the attire is wildly inappropriate for Kenya's stuffy courtrooms. Newspapers quoted Judge Sheikh Amin as saying at a conference in the port city of Mombasa that the wigs made Kenyan judges look like "second class englishmen." "It's high time we stopped the British style of dressing so many years after attaining independence," he said. But some of his colleagues more committed to tradition said they favored maintaining the status quo so that judges could be clearly distinguished from the public. Kenya gained its independence from Britain in 1963.



REHEARSAL: Russian Interior Ministry soldiers try to keep serious as they look at a boy walking along their line during a rehearsal in central St Petersburg on Tuesday. Many military units of the St Petersburg garrison are involved in preparations for the Victory Day parade due on May 9 (Reuters photo)

Pakistan foreign minister sees fruitful dialogue with India

NEW DELHI (R) — Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan was quoted on Tuesday as saying Islamabad hoped peace talks with New Delhi would move forward even if Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's government fell.

Khan told Cable News Network (CNN) television that three wars between the neighbouring countries could have been avoided, and that Pakistan would not allow the fresh peace talks which began last month to fail.

Khan was asked how a crisis threatening Deve Gowda's government affected the dialogue. Deve Gowda faces a vote of confidence in parliament on Friday.

"By and large the foreign policy of India may not undergo a drastic change," Khan said, according to a transcript of the interview released by CNN. "We are hopeful whichever government there is, existing or a new government, that we'd continue this dialogue in a fruitful manner."

Khan said three wars since 1947 between the two countries did not achieve much.

"Pakistan today is in a position to talk on substantial issues," he said. "We should talk and talk, and that's what we'll do. We'll talk, we will not allow the talks to break."

The Pakistani minister, who was to meet his Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral on Wednesday, urged New Delhi to reduce the number of security forces in Kashmir as a step towards settling a longstanding dispute over the region.

"What can happen is as a starter, India can reduce the troop level in Kashmir," he said.

A large number of Indian forces are deployed in Jammu and Kashmir state to combat a separatist insurgency.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training guerrillas fighting New Delhi's rule in the state, the only Muslim majority province in mostly Hindu India.

Asked if Pakistan would give an assurance that it would stop the infiltration of militants into Jammu and Kashmir, Khan said: "What is the Indian army doing there (with) 700,000 troops if they can't man the border?"

The Pakistani minister reiterated Islamabad's view that Kashmiris should be allowed to vote in a referendum to determine whether the region would be folded into Pakistan or India.

Khan said if the two countries settled their problems, they would unleash great dynamism. "We could both of us be super tigers in Asia," he said.

Khan and Gujral were scheduled to hold talks over breakfast on Wednesday starting at 9 a.m. (0330 GMT).

The two would carry forward four days of negotiations last month between the two nations' foreign secretaries — the highest ranking civil servants in the foreign ministries.

Diplomats said the talks on Wednesday were not expected to last long, and Khan was scheduled to leave New Delhi, where he has been attending a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, on the same day.

Cohen warns of danger if U.S. cuts its military presence in East Asia

TOKYO (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen defended the U.S. military presence in East Asia on Tuesday, warning that a reduction could lead to a regional arms race and an increased danger of conflict.

Cohen was responding to a stir caused here by his statement that U.S. force levels will remain at about 100,000 troops even if there is a peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

"If we were to have a substantial reduction of our force in the region, I believe that would set up a very negative dynamic, namely other countries would then feel an obligation to start arming themselves to a much greater level than they currently are," Cohen said at a news conference.

"That would not bode well I think for the region. It might in fact contribute to greater potential for conflict, which is something we do not want to see take place," he said.

Asked whether those troops were needed to check China's emerging military power, Cohen insisted they were "not directed toward China."

"Whatever China does in terms of the future, it's not going to alter what I think is a sound policy of having a presence in this region," he said.

In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry again criticised the U.S. presence, saying "Asia's problems should be solved by the countries which make up the region" and that stability could be maintained without outside interference.

Cohen has used his first Asian trip as secretary to send a clear message that U.S. security commitment to the region remains unchanged despite a post-cold war drawdown and growing restiveness among the Japanese.

The Japanese government assured Cohen the parliament would pass a special law extending leases for U.S. military facilities in Okinawa even if local landlords refuse to renew them when they expire.

But more than 18 months after the rape of a 12-year-old Okinawa schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen, protests and demands for a reduced U.S. military presence continue.

In visits to a U.S. air base and a naval base earlier in the day, Cohen reminded U.S. military personnel that they were goodwill ambassadors and one bad deed could spoil relations with Japan.

"Remember you are in effect an ambassador of the United States," Cohen told enlisted air force personnel at the Yokota Airbase, about 30 kilometres southwest of central Tokyo.

"Every one of you understand you can do a hundred good deeds and you will get credit for it," Cohen said. "On the other hand, one bad deed and that makes the headline news and changes people's perception of what we are doing as a nation," he said.

At Yokosuka, where Cohen spoke to sailors on the flight deck of the U.S. Aegis cruiser Bunker Hill, a U.S. navy petty officer is under investigation for allegedly assaulting a Japanese woman.

At each stop, he emphasised the importance of the U.S. relationship with Japan, calling it "the cornerstone" of the U.S. strategy to be a Pacific power.

"We are a global power and we want to continue to exercise our role as being a superpower... but we can't do it alone," Cohen said. "We have to have great allies, and Japan is a great ally of the United States."

"It is crucial to be involved with the Japanese people. It is crucial to our being able to exercise influence toward this entire region," he said in Yokota.

At Yokosuka, he told sailors the U.S. hopes its alliance with Japan "will continue indefinitely into the future for 50 and 100 years and well beyond."

Cohen was meeting later in the day with Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda to pursue talks on the U.S. military presence and regional issues such as the divided Korean Peninsula.

Monday, Japanese Defence Agency Director Fumio Kyuma assured Cohen that a special law extending the leases of U.S. military installations in Okinawa would be passed in time for a U.S.-Japan summit in two weeks, a U.S. spokesman said.

Some Okinawa landlords have threatened not to renew the leases when they expire.

"They believe that this (law) will pass and this will be done by the time Prime Minister Hashimoto meets President Clinton," Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said.

Cohen and Kyuma also reviewed progress on updating the 1978 defense guidelines that would spell out Japan's role in supporting U.S. forces in the event of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula, or other conflicts.

Washington wants written assurances that U.S. troops and aircraft will be able to use Japanese facilities and move through the country.

The issue is sensitive because Japan's post-war constitution bars it from using military force except in self-defence.

Bacon said the Japanese hoped to present an interim progress report sometime in May on the guidelines and the two sides are working to complete them by the time of a meeting of U.S. and Japanese foreign and defence ministers in September.

Cohen also raised U.S. interest in involving Japan in developing theatre missile defences, but Bacon said the issue was not a focus of Monday's talks.

India's Congress Party chief says open for dialogue

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Congress Party chief, Sitaran Kesri, on Tuesday struck a conciliatory note in the nation's political crisis, saying he was open to talks with Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's ruling alliance.

"I am ready for talks if the proposal comes from their side. There is no doubt in it," Kesri told Reuters after addressing a rally in the Indian capital.

Kesri triggered a political crisis on March 30 when he withdrew Congress's vital support for Deve Gowda's minority United Front Coalition government. Deve Gowda now faces a vote of confidence in parliament on Friday.

Earlier on Tuesday, Kesri was quoted as saying talks could begin provided Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda stepped down.

But the Congress leader set no such precondition at the rally.

"We are hungry for respect, not for power," Kesri told party supporters at the rally.

"I don't have anything personal against Deve Gowda. When I speak, I speak of Deve Gowda as the prime minister," he added. Many Congress members praised Kesri for his speech, which was moderate compared with an attack he launched on Deve Gowda last week.

"The earlier speech was a natural outburst against the insults heaped on Congress by the United Front," said a senior Congress leader, who asked not to be identified.

Kesri said the 10-month old minority United Front Coalition, which relied on the support of the 138 Congress deputies in parliament, never consulted the Congress Party on important policy decisions.

Nor did the United Front support Congress in key state polls in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, he said.

Kesri emphasised that Congress' fight was against communalism and poverty.

"Today, during Deve Gowda's regime, food prices have skyrocketed," he said.

Earlier, another Congress leader, Sharad Pawar, said the party appreciated many aspects of the pathbreaking 1997/98 (April-March) budget, hailed by industry and businessmen.

He assured his audience at the rally that the Congress did not want to damage the economy.

"Congress does not want to trigger a financial crisis in the country," Pawar said.

The United Front Coalition's highest decision-making body meets on Wednesday to discuss the political situation and also seek ways for the budget to be approved in parliament.

The Press Trust of India said Congress had suggested the setting up of a panel for formal talks with the United Front. Both Congress and United Front leaders said informal talks between the parties were going on at various levels and they hoped for a solution to the present crisis.

Rome government frayed as it readies for Albania vote

ROME (R) — Italy's centre-left government cleared the decks for a parliamentary vote on sending an Italian-led multinational security force to Albania Tuesday with its majority in tatters and its future in doubt.

Prime Minister Romano Prodi sounded a note of defiance, saying his administration was alive and well after the Communist Refoundation Party decided to break ranks with the government and vote against sending the military mission to Albania.

Refoundation leader Fausto Bertinotti, who has described the expedition as a neo-colonialist adventure, has said his party would also oppose the force if Prodi put the issue to a confidence vote in parliament.

This has raised a possibility the government could fall.

Refoundation is not part of the government but ensures its majority in the lower house where it holds the balance of power.

Asked in a newspaper interview if he was concerned at the damage Bertinotti was inflicting on his government, Prodi replied: "I am very well. I can't feel a scratch."

"I am disinfected Italy but its wounds are so deep that they are still stinging," Prodi told the Turin daily newspaper La Stampa.

Political commentators were much less sanguine about the government's prospects and said the coalition on which it was based had been severely strained, possibly beyond repair.

Prodi is expected to survive a vote in the Senate, where the government enjoys a majority, quite comfortably but will face a sterner test in the lower house Wednesday.

Government hopes that the centre-right opposition would support a joint motion in the lower house backing the mission were dealt a blow after far-right leader Gianfranco Fini said he would vote for it only if Prodi agreed to step down.

Fini and other opposition leaders, among them former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, were meeting Tuesday morning to hammer out a joint approach ahead of the debate in parliament.

"The aim is certainly to allow the mission to set off and then to verify and certify in parliament that the government majority does not exist any more," he said.

The influential Rome-based daily newspaper La Repubblica said in an editorial that even if the government did win support for the military mission its chances of pushing through key legislation in the coming months were much reduced.

"Everything leads one to believe that from now on nothing will be the same again," La Repubblica said.

La Stampa was even more damning. "The post-Prodi era has already begun and the only person who has not noticed is the individual directly involved," it commented.

The government has a crowded agenda in the run-up to the summer recess and is set to start negotiations with trades unions and employers on how to cut down to size a bloated and inefficient welfare state.

The talks are crucial if Italy is to maintain the momentum in its effort to cut state spending and prepare for membership of European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

British parties accused by churches of ignoring poor

LONDON (R) — Britain's churches entered a bitter campaign for the May 1 general election Tuesday by attacking the country's main political parties for putting tax cuts for the middle classes before the needs of the poor and jobless.

In the British general election campaign the political parties are competing for votes by promising low taxation, a council of churches' report said.

"When so many are living in poverty and unemployment, it is wrong to give priority to the claims of those who are already well off. None of the political parties has put forward a programme which offers much real hope of improvement to those in greatest need."

Both Labour, 20 percentage points ahead in the latest polls, and the ruling Conservatives immediately defended themselves against the report and accused their rivals of failing those most in need.

But the row over the church report looked set to be eclipsed by the theme which has dominated the campaign so far — sleaze.

Just hours after the launch of the report by the umbrella body for Britain and Ireland's main Christian churches, Neil Hamilton, a former Conservative minister embroiled in the sleaze row, will hear whether his constituency party will allow him to stand in the general election. Labour said the report backed policies it was advocating, such as a national minimum wage and working limits set down in the European Union's social charter.

"The churches are right to raise the concerns the whole of Britain has about unemployment and poverty in our midst," Labour economics spokesman Gordon Brown told a news conference.

"They are right to say we all pay the costs of social division and unemployment. We welcome the report," Labour blame poverty in Britain on 18 years of unbroken Conservative rule. Brown came in for hard questioning about Labour's pledge not to raise income tax rates in the five-year term of the next parliament — a policy designed to bury criticism that the party's instincts are to tax and spend. He shrugged off the criticism, saying Labour's policies would create jobs and reducing the ruling Conservatives of creating a "divided Britain" where one in five non-pensioner families had no wage earner.

Major, unveiling plans for local tax breaks for small firms, refused to be drawn on whether the churches were interfering in politics but said he disagreed with the report's conclusions.

"I have to say if you look at what has happened in recent years you see the reduction in unemployment... And I feel the sort of criticism (in the churches report)... Just seems to me to be mistaken," Major said.

Major also accused Labour of "gutter" politics for attacks on ex-Minister Hamilton, who denies allegations that he took cash to ask questions in parliament for business interests.

The decision by one of Britain's best-known journalists, BBC war reporter Martin Bell, to stand as an "anti-corruption" candidate has increased the pressure on Hamilton. Hamilton enjoys one of the safest Conservative majorities in the country in his Tunon constituency in northwestern England. But even his cushion of 22,000 votes at the 1992 election looks vulnerable if Bell stands. Both the Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates have promised to step down and hack Bell if Hamilton is endorsed as the Conservative candidate Tuesday. Labour leader Tony Blair has used the row to portray Major as a weak leader unable to control his fractious party.

Astronomer who discovered 'comet of century' needs a job

CLOUDCROFT, New Mexico (AFP) — Astronomer Alan Hale seems to have a solid resume. He has a Ph.D. and discovered the largest comet to sail past earth in our lifetime. But he cannot land a job.

"I have sent out so many applications. There are no jobs out there. None," lamented Hale, 39, whose name has become a household word for co-discovering the Hale-Bopp comet on July 22, 1995.

Hale talked about his uncertain future under a patchwork of luminous stars that lit up the black New Mexico sky where he lives near the Apache Mesquero reservation far from the glow of city lights.

Fading were the insistent media calls that had mounted as the comet came closer to Earth over the past weeks. It last passed Earth 4,200 years ago during the time of the Egyptian Pyramids and won't return for 2,400 years.

Coverage reached critical mass when the Heaven's Gate cult, whose 39 members saw the comet as a cosmic signal, committed suicide last month to hop what they believed was a spaceship trailing the comet.

Before scientists defined comets as "dirty snowballs" they were seen in ancient times as a portent of doom or prosperity. Times apparently have not changed that much, especially with a new millennium approaching.

"They said it was a messenger from God. I said it was a dirty snowball. Some people don't like some of the answers that scientists give them," Hale said.

Believers hanging out on the Internet were livid. Hale's E-mail was filled with hot, angry reactions from Doomsday cultists and UFO believers who have denounced him as an "Earth traitor" for refusing to tell the truth: Aliens are coming.

"Some said I was negotiating with the aliens so that they would divert it away from Earth. The price tag was that we would have to be their slaves," he said, bemused as his supposed cosmic power brokering.

All this attention has helped him capitalise on his celebrity and to temporarily tap the speaking tour market where he can occasionally make \$500 a day. There is talk of a book, but no contract yet.

Bill Bouke of the California Institute of Technology's Department of Planetary Sciences, expressed little surprise at Hale's dim job prospects in a field filled with doctorates and few new openings.

"It's important work he is doing and it should be done. It's valuable science. Unfortunately, after all the prestige and attention is gone, you don't necessarily get any money."

While the celebrity lasts, there are paid trips to New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Australia and a boat cruise for comet aficionados who want to catch the last glimpse of the comet before it disappears into the cosmos.

Still fresh is the memory of the first night Hale saw a bright, blurry uncharted object in Sagittarius. He checked it against the star charts and then again an hour later. It had moved. It was a comet.

To get credit for the comet, he E-mailed the Central Bureau of Astronomical Telegrams at the Harvard-Smithsonian Observatory. He was unaware that he was only minutes ahead of Thomas Bopp in Arizona whose cellular phone failed him and was forced to send word by telegram.

Hale went to share the news with his wife Eva, a registered nurse, who largely supports the family of four.

"I took my life in my hands to wake my wife and ask her if she wanted to see my comet. She uttered an expletive and asked if she had to get out of bed," but eventually rallied, he said.

His son Zachary, then eight years old, refused to budge, muttering about "Dad and his spacey stuff again."

Hale, who has a doctorate in astronomy from New Mexico Southern University, is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy from Annapolis, Maryland, said he savours every moment of the comet.

He is also struggling to establish his southwest institute for space research for anyone to study astronomy. Sun Microsystems donated about \$24,000 in computers. Local businessmen have kicked up to several hundred dollars each. "All I want is to be a point in my life where I can support myself and my family as an astronomer," said Hale. "After all the publicity, I figure I have a fighting chance."

ANKARA - AP's
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Turkey's Minis-
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tended to 5.2 B.
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defense cooperation
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Government issues new regulations for imports

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply Tuesday issued a new set of regulations that exempt importers from having to obtain import licences except for goods imported from 15 Arab states and Israel and those linked with Jordan through trade protocols and bilateral agreements that provide other customs exemptions.

Under the new rules, 43 items will still be subject to approval from the concerned official departments. The approval of these departments serves as an import licence.

The regulations listed plastic waste, table salt, mineral water, passenger vehicles driven by fuel other than petrol and vehicles above the five-year manufacturing age as the five commodities that cannot be imported under any circumstances.

The regulations confined the importation of certain commodities to specific

organisations. The firms and the products were as follows: The Jordan Tanning Company (raw leather), the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (oil products except mineral oil and gas cylinders), the Jordan Cement Factories Company (dark cement), the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (gun powder, explosives, explosive capsules, ammonium nitrate and raw phosphate) and the Ministry of Supply (used tyres, and cigarettes).

According to the regulations, all commodities imported for the University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, the Jordan University of Science and Technology, the Hashemite University and the Al Bait University will be exempted from obtaining import licences.

Also exempted are commodities imported under "the temporary admission category" unless they are destined to be used locally.

The new regulations stipulate that goods normally exempted from duty under the investment promotion law can be cleared without import licence even though the imported commodities might be brought into the country by firms acting for institutions which enjoy such exemptions.

Also exempted from import duty and import licence are vehicles with special specifications for the use of the disabled.

Import licences are required if they are destined to individuals or organisations for commercial purposes.

The regulations retain full or partial exemptions from import duty on commodities included in lists approved by the Council of Ministers.

The regulations indicated that import licences already issued by the Ministry of Industry and Trade will remain valid provided they are issued prior to March 2, 1997.

ESCWA sees GDP increasing in Jordan this year

AMMAN (Petra) — The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has estimated that the gross domestic product (GDP) in Jordan will increase to \$6,851.8 million in 1997 up from \$6,138.4 million in 1995.

The Amman-based U.N. commission anticipated that the GDP per capita will rise from \$1,445.3 in 1995 to \$1,504.2 in 1997, calculated at the fixed rates of 1992.

ESCWA expected an increase in the average actual growth rate of the median GDP per capita from 2.01 per cent in 1996 to 2.03 per cent in 1997.

ESCWA estimates are based on findings of several studies it has undertaken in the countries of the region. The findings concluded that Jordan has achieved an average GDP growth rate of 3.5 per cent, compared with a regional GDP growth rate of 3.04 per cent.

However, ESCWA said Jordan ranks second among the non-oil producing countries in terms of its GDP growth rate.

The actual average growth rate of the GDP per capita in Jordan is 2.03 per cent compared with an average of 0.27 per cent for the ESCWA countries.

U.S. to sell Jordan subsidised wheat, help reschedule debts

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States will sell subsidised wheat flour and corn to Jordan as well as extend credit to Amman for purchasing several other commodities as part of U.S. assistance to the Kingdom following His Majesty King Hussein's recent talks in Washington, official sources said.

The sources also said Washington had agreed to support Jordan's effort to reschedule its debts due for repayment between June 1997 and June 1999.

In a bid to improve the trade balance between the two countries, Jordan will also organise a "road show" of Jordanian products in at least four U.S. cities, the sources told the Jordan Times. The show will include meetings between Jordanian officials and businessmen on the one hand and American investors on the other in an effort to highlight the investment opportunities in the Kingdom.

A better atmosphere has been created for American investments in Jordan with the signing last week of a bilateral agreement under which the two governments undertook to provide special protection for

investments. U.S. economic and military assistance to Jordan was one of the key subjects the King discussed with U.S. President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials in Washington last week.

President Clinton himself said before the talks that Jordan deserved assistance and that the Kingdom, despite its key role and contribution to the Middle East peace process, had not received enough external support.

"I think that Jordan has done as much to keep the Middle East peace process alive and moving forward as any nation, without much — frankly, without much assistance from the outside world," said the president. "And I believe that we should do more, and that's another thing I want to discuss with His Majesty, what other steps we can take and how we might go about getting that done."

Since the Middle East peace process was launched in 1991, Washington has repeatedly said it was committed to helping Jordan's economic development. It has also taken several measures, both in terms of direct assistance as well as indirect help in streamlining the Jordanian economy and helping the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme.

Officials also say that Washington has been a strong force behind lobbying other donors, notably Japan and some European countries, to assist Jordan and also to respond positively to the Kingdom's efforts to reduce its debt burden.

BritishBank announces 1996 financial results

HSBC Holdings PLC, of which the BritishBank is a principal part, announced their 1996 results in March. The highlights show that operating profit before provisions was up 20% to 4,519 million sterling pound while pre-tax profit was up 23% to 4,524 million sterling pound. This resulted in a return on average shareholders funds of 21.3%. Group Chairman William Purves commented that the good results demonstrated solid growth in business and improved profitability in all of the major geographic regions where the group operates. The BritishBank of the Middle East reported an attributable profit of 62 million sterling pound compared with 58 million sterling pound for 1995, an increase of seven per cent. BritishBank is the largest and most widely represented international bank in the Middle East with 28 branches throughout the UAE, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Lebanon, an offshore banking unit in Bahrain and a new branch to be opened shortly in Ramallah. This extensive regional coverage is enhanced by its associates Saudi BritishBank and Egyptian BritishBank. BritishBank is a principal member of the HSBC Group since 1959. Headquartered in London with over 3,400 offices in 78 countries and assets as at Dec. 31, 1996 of \$402 billion, the HSBC Group is among the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7130	0.6180	1.4715	126.00	1.3672	1691.00	1.2273	5.7620
DE Mark	0.5836	1.0000	0.3987	0.6584	73.54	0.8095	986.87	1.1244	3.3646
GB Sterling	1.6260	2.7795	1.0000	2.3849	204.52	2.2556	2780.92	3.1327	9.3744
CH Franc	0.6796	1.1638	0.4175	1.0000	85.59	0.9422	1148.31	1.3107	3.9138
JP Yen	0.0079	1.3590	0.4876	1.1674	1.0000	1.1005	13.42	162.77	4.5716
CA Dollar	0.7209	1.2343	0.4432	1.0605	1.10	1.1814	1218.02	1.3883	4.1528
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0110	0.3630	0.8989	1344.81	0.8194	11.37	3.4037	9.9809
NL Guilder	0.5189	0.8826	0.3190	0.7640	65.35	0.7200	878.19	1.0000	2.9809
FR Franc	0.1736	0.2972	0.1066	0.2526	21.84	0.2406	33.40	33.4000	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7130	0.6180	1.4715	126.00	1.3672	1691.00	1.2273	5.7620
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.4092	0.8325	2.1408	180.00	2.0380	2500.00	2.8100	7.8774
GB Sterling	0.2667	0.4580	0.1006	0.27	23.00	0.2808	3.48	418.91	0.9041
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	4.5781	1.6446	4.35	369.00	4.0038	5.04	608.42	1.6911
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4695	0.1030	0.2747	23.00	0.2808	3.48	418.91	0.9041
Kuwait Dinar	3.3063	5.6736	2.0329	5.4421	462.00	5.0038	6.24	748.42	2.0912
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.4679	0.1021	0.2724	23.00	0.2808	3.48	418.91	0.9041
Lebanese \$1000	0.86	1.4696	0.5336	1.4447	123.00	1.3672	1691.00	1.2273	5.7620
Egyptian	0.2980	0.5089	0.1101	0.2980	25.00	0.3200	4.00	484.50	1.3333

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit
Brent	Barrel	18.95	Barrel	16.90	Barrel	18.95	Barrel	16.90	Barrel
W. Texas	Barrel	18.20	Barrel	16.10	Barrel	18.20	Barrel	16.10	Barrel
Bony	Barrel	18.95	Barrel	16.90	Barrel	18.95	Barrel	16.90	Barrel
Dubai	Barrel	18.05	Barrel	16.05	Barrel	18.05	Barrel	16.05	Barrel
U.L. Gas	1000 cu ft	188.00	1000 cu ft	186.00	1000 cu ft	188.00	1000 cu ft	186.00	1000 cu ft

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4578	0.16404	0.39277	33.6225	0.4280	5.1850	2175.85	4.7874
AE Dirham	0.2724	0.4677	0.16753	0.40112	34.3371	0.2808	3.48	418.91	0.9041
KW Dinar	3.3063	5.6736	2.0329	5.4421	462.00	5.0038	6.24	748.42	2.0912
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.6464	0.2332	0.6232	53.4338	0.6232	7.74	934.38	2.5938
CY Pound	1.959	3.3555	1.2038	3.2825	284.784	1.2038	14.88	1788.48	4.9438

Metal Prices									
Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity
Gold (oz's)	348.7	349.2	Silver (oz's)	4.81	4.83	Platinum (oz's)	365.5	366.5	AL (3 Months)
AL (3 Months)	1583	1588	CU (3 Months)	2284	2287	Zinc (3 Months)	1240	1245	Lead (3 Months)
Lead (3 Months)	649	654	Ni (3 Months)	7275	7285				

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
USD	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	GBP	5.95	6.25	6.45	6.78
JPY	0.43	0.40	0.56	0.44	DEM	2.99	3.21	3.18	3.06
FRF	3.15	3.18	3.25	3.29	CHF	1.68	1.68	1.63	1.68
ITL	7.00	7.00	6.97	6.81					

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	Index	Value	Change	Index	Value	Change	Index
New York DOW JONES	6553.64	-2.27	0.03	6569.5	6527.21	6526.07			
New York S&P 500	760.83	-1.2	-0.16	762.66	757.9	757.9			
London FTSE 100	4271.7	35.1	0.83	4273.1	4254.8	4236.6			
Tokyo NIKKEI 225	17854.59	138.82	0.78	17860.2	17826.3	17715.7			
Paris CAC 40	0	0	0	0	0	2572.31			
Frankfurt DAX	3312.88	67.95	2.09	3325.85	3298.38	3244.93			

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity	Unit	Price	Commodity
Coffee (c/lbs)	183.83	Spot	Cocoa (\$/ton)	1421	Spot	Sugar (\$/ton)	310.3	Spot	Wheat (\$/ton)
Wheat (\$/ton)	0	Spot	Soya (c/lbs)	22.91	Spot	Tea (stg/kg)	140	Spot	Barley (\$/bsh)
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	Rice (\$/ton)	490	Spot				

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	GB Sterling	1.1543	1.1601	DE Mark	0.4182	0.4203	CH Franc
CH Franc	0.4883	0.4907	FR Franc	0.1242	0.1248	JP Yen	0.5686	0.5694	NL Guilder
NL Guilder	0.3716	0.3735	IT Lira	0.4234	0.4255				

THE Daily Crossword									
Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down
1 Throng	14 Part of a pipe	10 Andor	14 Of sound	15 Woody's boy	16 Western	17 WWI documentary	20 Hockey great	21 Finest	22 Snoops
23 Medicinal plant	24 Italian resort	26 Frankenstein drama	32 Fixed a window	33 Mesh grating	34 Investment fund: abbr.	35 Elevator man	36 Throws down the gauntlet	38 Flunk out	39 Farrow
40 Cordage fiber	41 Evangelist	42 Mike Newell film	46 Brainstorm	47 Snakes	48 Digestion	51 Quote	52 Beverly Hills of TV	55 Preston Sturges comedy	59 Tropical Asian tree
60 Hangover?	61 Thick	62 Ballad	63 Chopping tools	64 Spirited horse					

by Gayle Dean									
Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down
9 Extinct bird	10 Shallow body of water	11 Musical piece	12 Shop clamp	13 Dines	18 Gaseous element	19 Reversed	23 Streets: abbr.	24 Harp's kin	25 Wife of Osiris
26 Ellington's "Doll"	27 Early computer	28 See eye-to-eye	29 Dolphins' home	30 Satellite of Uranus	31 Ivy League school	32 Fleishy fruit	36 Beach sight	37 — boy!	38 Evergreens
40 Wears out	41 Adds	43 Concealing	44 Platforms	45 Italian wine city	48 Performs	49 Scram!	50 Press agent?	51 Spelunker's place	52 Wedding time
53 Other	54 Tinted	56 Pokoe	57 Upper limits: abbr.	58 Deep black					

JACK ACERB TRAP									
Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down	Across	Down
ALOE COVER IOWA	MOUNT THESOA PBOX	SUP ROAN ANSEL	URN EODY	DENIMS TREY LAP	EVITA MARS COO	GET INTO HOT WATER	ARES ODOR ISTLE	SYR CRUE ECHOES	ARTS OAK
TABOO ETTA AKA	THROW IN THE TOWEL	RAID SORER PALE	AIDE EMERY TYPE						

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A fellow associate can give you some fine suggestions today, so be sure to ask others for advice if you have questions. Drive carefully while on the highway later this evening, thereby avoiding any difficulties.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If there is some little risk you want to take today, proceed cautiously and you can come out on top. Be sure handle your money wisely so that you can pay all of your bills and still have funds for an emergency.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have some good ideas today for improving relationships with your family, however, you must act quickly to get the right results. Later this evening will be good time to meet with close friends at recreational activities.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't get emotional over business affairs today, stay cool and sensible so that you can make a great deal of progress. Enjoy the company of some old friends later this evening and you can all have a wonderful time together.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Although you are usually quite generous by nature, this is a good time to tighten your belt and add to your assets instead. Later this evening will be a good time to stay at home with your loved ones and simply relax.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get together today with some new acquaintances who have tastes similar to your own and thereby you can apply some of the same ideas. You'll have a good time and make some great new contacts which will be quite beneficial.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Since you have some free time today, this would be a good day to catch up on any duties you left unfinished. Be kind and considerate to your mate and show him or her some affection by planning something special.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A good friend who is a bit of a perfectionist can help you sort out a financial difficulty. Be sure to your gratitude towards this individual for the assistance by doing something special which will be appreciated.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you need a favour from superior today, this is definitely the right time to ask for and get it. Go out visiting with your mate later this evening and you can both have fun together in a special and romantic location.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be alert to some new opportunities today which are coming into your life. If you have to plan a trip later this evening, make safe your first consideration everything with your vehicle and road conditions.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to analyse both your assets and your liabilities so you will know better how to proceed financially in the days ahead. Later this evening will be good for meeting with fellow associates on a new project.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Have a long discussion with some fellow business associates and come to a meeting of the minds which will make your career activities more successful. Leave yourself time to relax later this evening and release any stress.

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan Dairy Company posts JD6.45m in sales last year

**** THE JORDAN Dairy Company** managed to record a total of JD6.45 million in sales last year despite stiff competition in the market. The company's board chairman Ahmad Mufleh Horani told the general assembly that the number of competitors has increased in a limited market. He indicated that the dairy products and their short period of validity for consumption do not give enough room for export opportunities. In addition, Dr. Horani said, neighbouring countries enjoy high productivity of similar products.

As a result of the high volume of sales, the company was able to generate a net profit of about JD631,000, 45 per cent higher than the net profit posted in 1995. Consequently, the general assembly approved the distribution of cash dividends at a rate of 22 per cent.

Other financial figures in the company's 1996 annual report show total assets rising by 12.5 per cent to reach about JD3.6 million and shareholders' equity increasing by 2.7 per cent to JD2.3 million (Al Aswaq).

Vehicles Owners Federation Company doubles capital

**** THE GENERAL** assembly of the Vehicles Owners Federation company has approved a recommendation by the board of directors to distribute JD210,000 in cash dividends at a rate of 35 per cent. The general assembly also approved increasing the company's capital by JD600,000 to become JD1.2 million by capitalising the additional amount from the voluntary reserves and retained earnings which total JD991,500. This amount exceeds the capital by 65 per cent and represents 97 per cent of the total shareholders' equity.

According to the 1996 annual report, the company's gross profit last year amounted to JD973,400 compared to JD709,900 registered in 1995. The net pre-tax profit stood at JD369,800 at the end of 1996 compared to JD160,700 in the preceding year.

Board Chairman Mustafa Abu Qura told the general assembly that last year's total earnings amounted to JD748,800 (JD526,800 in 1995) and that the company has increased its stake in the unified company for organising land transport from JD1.3 million to JD1.4 million. Mr. Abu Qura also indicated that the company has increased its long-term investments in four Jordan companies from JD1.67 million in 1995 to JD1.77 million. He estimated the market value of the company's investments in the four companies (the Jordan Islamic Bank, the Unified Company for Organising Land Transport, the Islamic Insurance Company and Al Amin Investment Company) at JD2.89 million (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

Dollar hits four-year high against the yen on interest rate differential

LONDON (AFP) —

Expectations of a rise in U.S. interest rates fuelled a surge in the value of the dollar to a 55-month high point against the yen on Tuesday as Japanese investors pumped funds into U.S. treasury bills, economists said.

The dollar also rose sharply against the mark, pulling the pound up in its slipstream to levels not seen since the British currency was forced out of the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) in 1992.

The U.S. currency strengthened against most European currencies, as the long march towards the single European currency found fresh legs. Dealers

said that European economic and monetary union (EMU) now seems more likely than it did in early 1997.

Uncertainty then over which countries will sign up to the euro and whether the currency will be a "hard" or "soft" money conspired to weaken most European currencies.

Against the yen, the dollar rose above 126 yen for the first time since August 1992. The dollar has risen by 50 per cent against the yen since the spring of 1995.

The chief economist at American Express Bank, John Calverley, said that the main cause "seems to be the interest rate differential"

between the United States and its key trading partners. He also pointed to a future trend of divergent interest rates in the leading industrial economies of the United States, Japan and Germany.

"U.S. interest rates are moving up, while Japanese rates are expected to stay pretty low and German rates will remain lower than U.S. rates," Mr. Calverley said.

The Japanese base rate is 0.5 per cent but the equivalent rate in the United States is 3.5 per cent and consequently yields on dollar-denominated investments are higher than yields on Japanese bonds.

Japanese investment

funds have ploughed vast sums into the U.S. financial markets to take advantage of this interest rate differential.

A 0.25 percentage point rise in U.S. short-term lending rates on March 25 has led the markets on edge.

Even if inflationary pressures in the U.S. economy appear to be restrained, most economists predict that U.S. rates will be raised further.

Economists say that Japan has been happy to see the dollar rise so sharply against its national currency, in spite of public declarations to the contrary.

"Our feeling is that the Japanese don't really mind a weaker yen, because it is

good for them," Mr. Calverley said.

The strength of the dollar makes Japanese imports into the United States seem relatively cheaper to U.S. consumers.

Japanese Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka said his ministry would respond "appropriately" to the dollar's rapid ascent against the yen, but he said that Japanese interest rates would not be raised in the near future.

A decision by European finance ministers at a meeting in the Dutch resort town of Noordwijk last weekend to press on with plans to introduce a single European currency on Jan. 1, 1999 flew in the face of previous market scepticism.

"There was a feeling a few weeks ago that the whole thing wouldn't happen," the London-based economist said.

Despite the latest wave of

optimism with regard to the launch of the euro, Mr. Calverley stressed that the single European currency would be an "untried currency." He added: "That's bearish for the European currencies."

These worries have hit the mark hardest out of European currencies. Germany has the most to lose if it cashes in its hard currency for a softer euro.

German Finance Minister Theo Waigel seemed to throw open the gates of the single currency to the soft currencies of southern Europe when he hinted at a possible relaxation of the convergence criteria for the currency.

Despite assurances from Mr. Waigel that he would be insistent on strict adherence to the criteria, the mark slumped to its lowest level for more than a month of more than 1.71 marks to the dollar.

Japan opens floodgates on bond market

TOKYO (AFP) — A widening gap on returns in the U.S. and Japanese bond markets — five percentage points — has led to a flood of capital for offshore markets and sent the dollar surging Tuesday, analysts said.

The dollar crossed the 126 yen level for the first time since August 1992 in mid-afternoon trading.

For investors, the feeble returns offered on Japanese bonds has sent them looking elsewhere for a place to park their money.

"Japan's interest rates are too low," said Tatsuya Hiyoshi at Sanwa Bank, adding "investors have no choice" but to go offshore to maximise returns on their portfolios.

A dealer at a European bank said: "Japanese investments in foreign bonds will be unstoppable for the time being, resulting in a higher dollar."

The gap in returns was simply too large to ignore, the dealer said.

A sign of the lack of confidence of financial markets in the strength of Japan's economic recovery, the Japanese bond market has risen to new historic highs.

with a concomitant fall in returns.

On Monday, 10-year treasury bonds were offering a return of 2.095 per cent, a rate never seen before. U.S. 30-year bonds, which the Japanese bond is traditionally compared, promised 7.0613 per cent and the yield was expected to rise higher. Financial markets see another increase in interest rates by the U.S. Federal Reserve's board in coming weeks.

For the Japanese banks, which can borrow at a rate of 0.5 per cent a year from the Bank of Japan, the margin offers big profits.

For Japan's giant life insurance companies, which promise fixed and high returns on their policies, high yielding overseas bonds are the only solution as they have not been able to generate enough on the weak Japanese stock market to honour those promises.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported Nippon Life Co. Insurance and Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Co. expect to invest 300 billion yen (\$2.4 billion) in foreign bonds in the financial year just beginning.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"This marriage quiz wants me to list all of your talents. How do you spell 'biodegradable'?"

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(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: NUDGE FORTY TACKLE OROWSY
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Rubin upsets Paulus at Bausch Lomb championships

AMELIA ISLAND (R) — American Chanda Rubin scored the first upset of the Bausch Lomb Championships Monday with a 6-4 7-6 (7-3) first-round victory over 10th seed Barbara Paulus of Austria.

Jennifer Capriati rebounded from a 5-1 deficit in the first set to capture a 7-6 (7-3) 6-2 first-round match over 73rd-ranked Catalina Cristea of Romania. The victory sets up an all-American second-round contest between the 27th-ranked Capriati and third seed Monica Seles Wednesday.

The top eight seeds, led by Jana Novotna of the

Czech Republic, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain, Seles and Conchita Martinez of Spain, all received first-round byes.

The 30th-ranked Rubin had no easy time posting the one hour, 53 minute victory over the 18th-ranked Paulus. "This was a great match for me to get through," Rubin said. "It was my first match on clay this year. It gave me a little bit of a gauge on where my game is at."

A right wrist injury sustained at the Lipton championships in March 1996 kept Rubin out of action most of last year. On the comeback trail, Rubin still finds it difficult to close out matches after taking the

lead. "When I would get up, I didn't capitalise on it," Rubin said. "It was frustrating partly because I let her take control when I was ahead." From 1-1 in the first set, the next three games were service breaks to put Rubin ahead with a service break 3-2.

In the second set, there were six service breaks. At 6-5 and serving in the second set, Rubin went ahead 30-0, but lost the next four points to end up in a tiebreaker.

"I started that game off well and I wanted to be aggressive, but couldn't," Rubin said. "That last game was a disappointing game."

Leading 2-1 in the tiebreaker, Rubin broke

Paulus's serve on the next two points. Although Paulus recouped one mini-break on the sixth point, Rubin broke Paulus's serve on the ninth point for a 6-3 lead and match point.

The 27th-ranked Capriati started tentatively, but at 5-1 started to take control. She won six of the next seven games to push Cristea into a tiebreaker.

"I got a slow start," Capriati said. "My shots felt solid. I was hitting the ball all right. It just took me a while to get into the match. At 5-3, I started playing a lot better and got more confidence."

From 2-2 in the second set, Capriati won the final four games.

Hornets beat Cavs in OT; Iverson scores 44 as 76ers lose

CLEVELAND (R) — Tony Delk hit a game-tying three-pointer with five seconds left in regulation and Glen Rice scored five of his 42 points in overtime as the Charlotte Hornets beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 110-105 Monday.

"It was really a good win," said Hornets coach Dave Cowens.

A Terrell Brandon jumper put the Cavs up 96-92 with 43 seconds to go in the fourth quarter but Rice hit a three-pointer 18 seconds later to cut the lead to one point.

Danny Ferry answered with two free throws with 12 seconds left, but Delk took the halfcourt inbounds pass, worked around a screen by Malik Rose and hit the tying three-pointer.

"It was a play designed for me to penetrate and then try to dish to Glen (Rice), but the defender went up under the screen and that left me wide open so I just took the shot," said Delk.

Brandon was called for travelling on Cleveland's next possession and Ricky Pierce missed a long three-pointer at the buzzer.

Charlotte outscored Cleveland 12-7 in overtime.

"I think we were a little more aggressive in the overtime," said Rice. "We were getting to the loose balls, were hitting some big shots and kind of felt the momentum swing to our side."

Pierce scored 15 points and Delk had 12 for Charlotte, which has won four straight.

The Hornets, who won for just the third time in 19 games at Cleveland, moved two games behind Atlanta and Detroit for fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

Ferry netted a season-high 23 points and Chris Mills had 22 for Cleveland, which has lost six of its last eight games and fell one game behind Washington for the eighth and final playoff berth in the East.

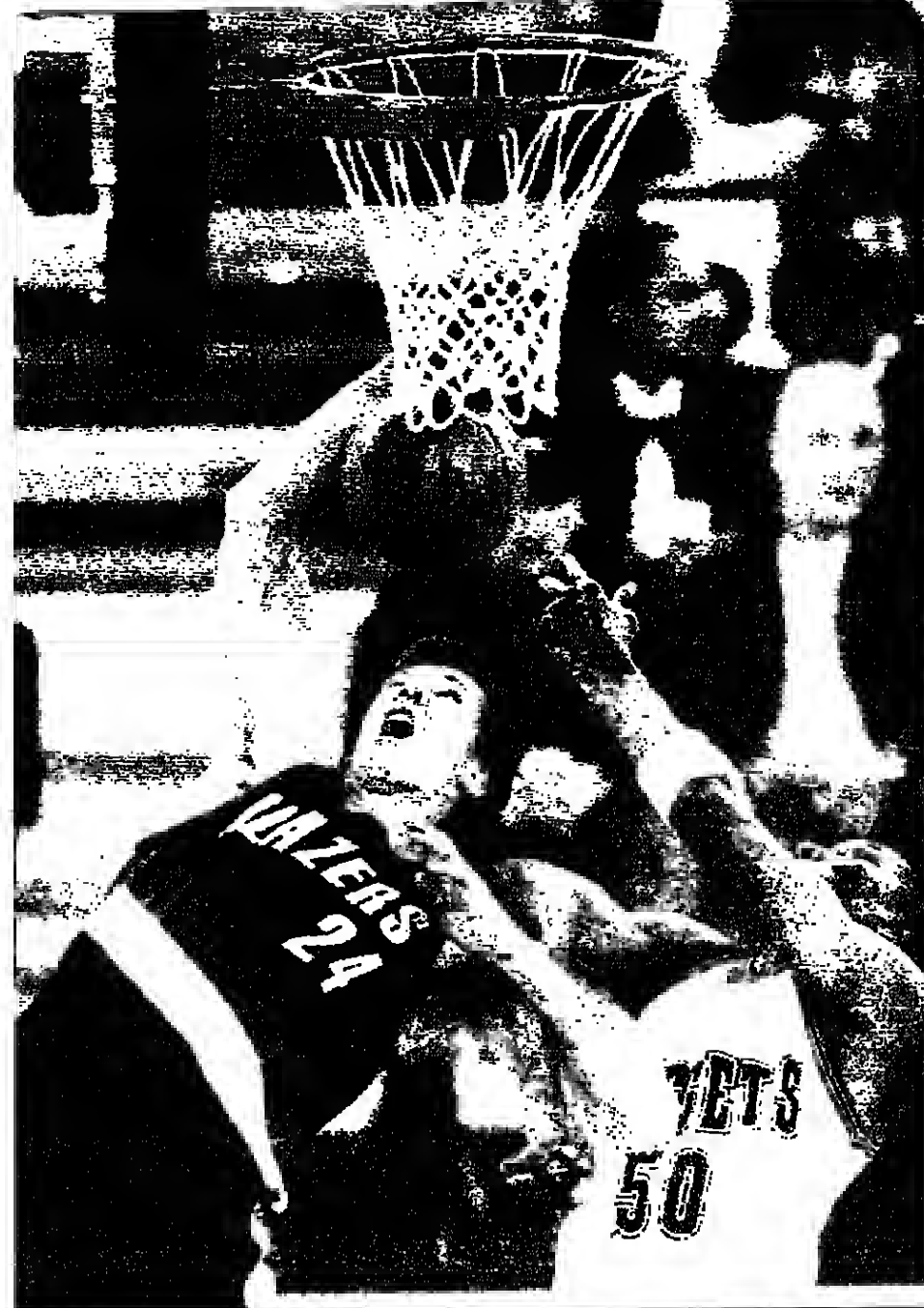
The Cavs allowed a season high in points and lost for the first time in 14 games when scoring 100 or more points.

"Glen Rice was superb tonight and I thought Tony Delk came in and helped turn the game around," said Cavs coach Mike Fratello. "We had too many breakdowns and too many mistakes mentally and physically. To be honest, they deserved to win the game in the end."

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 12 of his 30 points in a game-breaking run closing the third quarter as the Bulls beat the Philadelphia 76ers for the 15th straight time, 128-102.

Scottie Pippen scored 28 points and Ron Harper had a season-high 22 for the Bulls, who used their second-best offensive output of the season to overcome a career-high 44 points by 76ers guard Allen Iverson. It was the most points by any rookie in the NBA this season.

Chicago, which had already clinched homecourt advantage throughout the playoffs, has won 11 of its last 12 games. The Bulls need four wins in their last six games to reach 70 victories for the second straight season.



Denver Nuggets' center Ervin Johnson (50) grabs Portland Trail Blazers centre Chris Dudley as he attempts a layup in the first quarter of NBA play in Denver. Johnson was called for a foul on the play (Reuters photo)

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Atlantic Division				
X-Miami	57	18	.760	-
X-New York	53	22	.707	.4
Orlando	41	34	.547	16
Washington	39	36	.520	18
New Jersey	23	51	.311	33 1/2
Philadelphia	21	54	.280	36
Boston	13	63	.171	44 1/2

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Z-Chicago	66	10	.868	-
X-Detroit	51	24	.680	14 1/2
X-Atlanta	51	24	.680	14 1/2
X-Charlotte	49	26	.653	16 1/2
Cleveland	38	37	.507	27 1/2
Indiana	37	38	.493	28 1/2
Milwaukee	29	45	.392	36
Toronto	27	48	.360	38 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Midwest Division				
X-Utah	58	17	.773	-
X-Houston	51	24	.680	7
Minnesota	37	38	.493	21
Dallas	22	53	.293	36
Denver	20	55	.267	38
San Antonio	19	56	.253	39
Vancouver	12	65	.156	47

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
X-Seattle	52	24	.684	-
X-LA Lakers	51	24	.680	1/2
X-Portland	45	32	.584	7 1/2
Phoenix	36	39	.480	15 1/2
LA Clippers	34	41	.453	17 1/2
Sacramento	30	45	.400	21 1/2
Golden State	28	47	.373	23 1/2

X — Clinched playoff berth
Z — Clinched conference title

ond-best offensive output of the season to overcome a career-high 44 points by 76ers guard Allen Iverson. It was the most points by any rookie in the NBA this season.

Chicago, which had already clinched homecourt advantage throughout the playoffs, has won 11 of its last 12 games. The Bulls need four wins in their last six games to reach 70 victories for the second straight season.

Clarence Weatherspoon had 19 points and 12 rebounds for the 76ers, who have lost four in a row and have not beaten the Bulls since December 8, 1995.

Since arguing with Bulls stars Jordan, Pippen and Dennis Rodman in the clubs' initial meeting, Iverson has averaged 37.7 points in three games against the defending NBA champions.

At Detroit, Alonzo Mourning and P.J. Brown scored 21 points apiece and led Miami's dominance on the boards as the Heat beat the Pistons 94-88 for their fourth straight victory.

Brown pulled down 13 rebounds and Mourning added nine for the Heat, who have won 12 of their last 13 games. Miami out-rebounded Detroit 46-32.

Tim Hardaway added 19 points, including a clutch three-pointer with 1:26 left, along with nine assists and eight rebounds.

Otis Thorpe had 23 points and 13 rebounds and grant hill scored 21 points for the pistons, who have lost all three meetings with Miami and fell into a tie with Atlanta for the fourth spot in the Eastern Conference.

At Utah, Karl Malone, John Stockton and Jeff Hornacek were all in double figures by halftime as the Jazz rolled to their 13th straight victory, 116-93 over the San Antonio Spurs.

Malone scored 26 points to lead the Jazz, who are two shy of the franchise-record winning streak set earlier this season.

In Denver, Isaiah Rider scored 28 points including a clutch jumper in the final minute to lift the Portland Trail Blazers to a 110-104 victory over the Nuggets.

Clifford Robinson added 23 points for the Trail Blazers.

Scientist's theory says soccer fans could score breathtaking goals

LONDON (AFP) — A British scientist has come up with a theory which could enable football fans to score, well, breathtaking goals.

Bruce Davies, of Heriot Watt University, in Edinburgh, said if enough fans blow hard enough at the same time then the path and flight of a football (soccer ball) could be affected.

"Really it is a bit tongue in cheek, but it is scientifically possible. If there is sufficient force, the trajectory of the ball can be affected," said Davies.

"I do have to say the possibility is fairly remote."

The Welsh professor, who lectures in mechanical and chemical engineering and supports Scottish

Division Two side Livingston, said unless fans stood behind each other and blew with sufficient force, the chances of an aimless shot suddenly turning towards goal were slim.

"Not to mention the away fans, who will of course be blowing the other way," he added.

Klinsmann knocks Real link

MUNICH (AFP) — German striker Jurgen Klinsmann, who is leaving Bayern Munich at the end of the season, says that contrary to reports Real Madrid have made no move to sign him.

Germany's national captain, who says he wants to go to Spain or return to either England, where he played a season for Spurs, or Italy, where he played for Inter Milan, had been linked with Real Madrid.

But he told Bavarian TV: "So far nobody from Real Madrid has made an approach."

Klinsmann has also been linked with English Premiership side Everton.

Fittipaldi out for 2 months

SYDNEY (R) — Brazilian Christian Fittipaldi will be unable to drive for at least two months after breaking his leg on Sunday in a high-speed crash, an Australian IndyCar spokeswoman said on Tuesday.

Fittipaldi, who broke his right leg in two places in a spectacular crash during the street circuit race at Queensland's Surfers Paradise on Sunday, was "stable and comfortable" in a local hospital.

A steel rod 360mm (14 inches) long was inserted into the leg during three-hour corrective surgery on the tibia bone on Sunday night, IndyCar Australia spokeswoman Nan Dwyer said.

Fittipaldi was injured in a crash at the end of the first lap, forcing a restart of the race, which was won by American driver Scott Pruett.

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A representative from Coventry University UK, Dr. Hafid Al-Daffaee, will be visiting the Kingdom for the duration

5-13 April 1997

During his visit he will be having meetings at the Universities of the Kingdom and will be giving talks on recent research within the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Coventry University.

The talks include

- *Sonochemistry
- *Environmental Analysis
- *Biotechnology and Environmental Stress
- *Air Conditioning using Solar Energy
- *Safety in the Science Laboratory

Dr. Al Daffaee will be meeting prospective students who wish to apply for undergraduate or postgraduate studies in the sciences, engineering and humanities at Coventry University. The meeting will be

On Thursday 10 April
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For further information and appointment for counselling please contact Dr. Al-Daffaee at the Marriott telephone 607607.

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Princess Anne presents the winner's trophy to jockey Tony Dobbin (R) after the 150th running of the Grand National at Aintree, Lord Gyllene, ridden by Dobbin, won the rescheduled famous steeplechase. Security, following a bomb threat which forced the cancellation of the race on April 5, had been heightened at the famous track (Reuters photo)

Balls and boos rain down in American League

MILWAUKEE (R) — It rained baseballs and boos in the American League Monday.

In Milwaukee, Mike Matheny hit his second career grand slam and Cal Eldred won his first start of the season as the Brewers beat the Texas Rangers 5-3 in their home opener — a game they nearly had to forfeit.

The game was delayed twice for a total of 30 minutes by fans at County Stadium throwing promotional baseballs onto the field. There were delays of 14 and 16 minutes in the second inning, when Matheny connected to give Milwaukee a 4-1 lead.

Threats of a forfeit from umpire crew chief Jim McKean and pleas from Brewers manager Phil Garner to the crowd allowed the game to continue without incident, although Rangers manager John Oates played the contest under protest.

"If there had been another major incident where several balls had come on the field, and certainly if a ball had hit a player, it definitely would have been forfeited," Garner said.

Promotional baseballs thrown on the field were the source of baseball's last forfeit, at Dodger Stadium August 10, 1995.

"What is wrong with giving it to them as they leave the ballpark?" asked Oates. "It is way overdue. They have no need to have a ball, a pin, a Frisbee, a hat, I don't care what it is, they have no need for it until they leave the ballpark."

The Brewers trailed 1-0 when Jeremy Burnitz drew a one-out walk and Jose Valentin reached on an infield single, producing the first shower of baseballs. After the delay, a single by Gerald Williams loaded the bases and Matheny hooked a shot inside the left-field foul pole for his first homer of the season, starting another downpour of baseballs.

"At that particular time, I was down in the count," Matheny said. "I had two strikes and I wasn't exactly looking for anything. I was wanting to put the ball in play, and get us a chance to put a couple of runs on board."

The blast came off Rangers starter Ken Hill (1-1).

Texas's Mickey Tettleton homered in his third straight game. He has three hits this season, all homers. In Kansas City, Jeff King's sacrifice fly with one out in the bottom of the ninth scored Bip Roberts and lifted the Royals to a 6-5 victory over Roberto Alomar — booed throughout the game — and the Baltimore Orioles.

King also homered for Kansas City, as did Craig Paquette, while Brady Anderson hit one out for Baltimore.

Alomar played in his first

game of the year after a five-game suspension for spitting in the face of umpire John Hirschbeck last September.

He was 2-for-3 with a run scored and a sacrifice before being pinch-run for in the eighth after aggravating an ankle injury.

"It's nice to be out there," said the second baseman. "It's nice to be out there with the guys. I would have been more fun if we won. I just want to go out there and play my game. The fans are entitled to their opinion."

Jamie Walker (1-1) picked up the win after striking out Rafael Palmeiro with two on and two out in the top of the ninth. It was Walker's first Major-League win. Armando Benitez (0-1) took the loss.

In Seattle, Sandy Alomar homered in his fourth straight game, a three-run shot, and Manny Ramirez homered and drove in three runs, as the Cleveland Indians won their third straight, 8-3 over the Mariners.

Russ Davis had a career-high three hits and Edgar Martinez smacked a solo homer for Seattle, which has lost four of its last five games.

In Anaheim, Derek Jeter reached base in all five plate appearances and scored twice as the New York Yankees defeated the Angels, 5-3.

Jeter had three singles for his fourth multi-hit game in

a row. Since going hitless in his first eight at-bats of the season, Jeter is 13-for-14 to raise his average to .500.

In Detroit, Brian Johnson hit a three-run homer and drove in four runs as the Tigers broke a 17-game home losing streak with a 10-4 home-opening victory over the Minnesota Twins.

Detroit, which suffered through a Major-League worst 109 losses last season, leads the Majors with 53 runs.

In Oakland, Mark McGwire homered and drove in three runs and Jason Giambi added a two-run home run to lead the Athletics to a 6-2 victory over the Boston Red Sox. Oakland has won three of its last four games. McGwire is batting .389 with eight RBI.

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN HELD the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to a goalless draw Tuesday in the opening match of the Group 3 Asian World Cup qualifiers which kicked off in Manama, Bahrain.

While a win would have given the Kingdom a strong start in the qualifiers, the Jordanian team nevertheless played a good match and was no easy opponent for the UAE, a 1990 World Cup qualifier and currently Asia's second ranked team.

Jordan will be playing hosts Bahrain April 14 in their other first round/first leg Group 3 match. Bahrain meet the UAE April 11.

The second leg of the qualifiers will start in Sharjah, UAE, April 19 with only the group winner qualifying to the second round.

This is the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round

qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and USA 94.

Jordan's team had an intense four-month training programme and officials had voiced hope that the team would be able to qualify to the second round for the first time.

Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

The Jordanian team had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman.

Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat.

The team's training camps and preparations cost the JSF over JD 60,000.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups. Some groups have

already begun their qualifiers.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan,

Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

FIFA referees for the Group 3 qualifiers represent Saudi Arabia, Syria, China, Yemen, Oman, Turkmenistan and Kuwait.

Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Deputy Chairman Saleh Al-Saidat and Secretary-General Hisham Asfour head Jordan's 31-member delegation which includes nine officials including referee Duhham Egeidat, team manager Abullatif Abdul Majid, coaches Mohammad Awad and Adnan Mastud, goalkeepers coach Basem Tayyem, and physiotherapist Hussein Attallah.

The Kingdom's initial lineup includes: Murtaz Rishch, Youssef Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Al-Hadadi, Abdullah Abu Zume'h, Isam Mahinoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad and Hassoumet Sheikh.

JTV coverage of Group 3 matches

First leg in Bahrain		
Bahrain — UAE	April 11	5:15 p.m.
Bahrain — Jordan	April 14	5:15 p.m.
Second leg in Sharjah		
Bahrain — Jordan	April 19	5:00 p.m.
UAE — Bahrain	April 22	5:00 p.m.
UAE — Jordan	April 26	5:00 p.m.

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Water Authority Of Jordan
Announces
The Sale Of Old Ipc Steel Pipeline By
Public Auction

The Water Authority announces the sale of old IPC steel pipeline (16") by public auction for a total length of 25 KM in Azraq area. The pipeline extends from well No. 14 till well No. 134. The auction will be held on 12th of April 1997 at 11 a.m. Those who are interested in purchasing the pipes should contact the selling committee at Al-Mafraq Water Directorate. The bidders are requested to submit 20% of the auction value "in cash" or a cheque certified through a reputable bank. The purchaser shall pay customs duties, auction duties, the revenue stamps, and any other taxes and duties.

Eng. Koussai Quteishat
Acting Secretary General

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Iran mounts pressure on Germany ahead of Berlin trial verdict

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has stepped up pressure on Germany on the eve of a crucial verdict in the trial in Berlin of five men accused of killing Iranian opposition leaders on the direct orders of the Iranian regime.

The Iranian judiciary said Monday it plans to try 24 German companies for allegedly providing Iraq with chemical weapons or technology during its 1980-1988 war against Iran.

It said the defendants would be called to appear in a Tehran court shortly following complaints from more than 1,000 relatives of the victims of chemical attacks during the war.

"Certain" German officials will also be targeted by the Iranian suit for issuing permits to the firms to export such deadly devices, the judiciary said.

The fundamentalist daily Jomhuri-Isfahani ran a front-page article on the case on Tuesday with a big headline reading: "Twenty-four German firms to be tried in Tehran soon."

Kayhan, also representing Islamic hardliners, warned in an editorial that "the West and Germany will be made to pay a price for their offence to the sacred values" of the Islamic republic.

Iran first threatened to sue the German companies over alleged chemical aid to Iraq last November after German prosecutors linked Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani with the 1992 murder of four Kurds in a Berlin restaurant.

Foreign diplomats in Tehran noted, however, that no date had been set for the trial of the proceedings against the German companies.

They also questioned the validity of the case as the accusations come nearly nine years after the end of the conflict with Iraq and there was no detailed list of the firms involved.

Bonn has acknowledged that German companies were involved in building chemical plants in Iraq in the early 1980s but says the assistance was intended for agricultural purposes, although the factories were later mod-

ified by Baghdad to produce material for military use.

Relations between Iran and its main trade partner, Germany, have been strained over the trial of an Iranian and four Lebanese nationals accused of gunning down the Kurds.

German federal prosecutors said in summing up their case that the trial had cast light on "Iranian state terrorism" and Tehran's "death machine."

An arrest warrant has already been out for Iran's Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian for allegedly ordering the killings.

A verdict against Iran could also threaten relations between Iran and the European Union, which has been pursuing a "critical dialogue" with the Islamic republic despite U.S. misgivings.

The United States, accusing Tehran of sponsoring international terrorism, has been urging European countries to isolate Iran.

"A judgement even symbolically condemning Iran for terrorism will be a victory for the Americans who call for an international boycott of Tehran," a Western diplomat said here.

Relations are already precarious between Iran and the EU over the affair of Salman Rushdie — the British author condemned to death for blasphemy against Islam in his book *The Satanic Verses*.

Many diplomats said relations could suffer further between Iran and the rest of the EU if a major problem developed between Tehran and Bonn.

"Between ties with Iran and those with Germany, we are sure to choose the latter," a European ambassador said.

Bonn said Monday that the outcome of the trial could lead to a complete review of relations with Iran.

Foreign diplomats here said, however, that Iran might be able to swallow a negative verdict if it avoided mentioning Ayatollah Khamenei as a culprit.

"But if Ayatollah Khamenei as the spiritual guide is cited, the situation will be very difficult to manage," one diplomat predicted.



A large rock bounces off the plastic shield of an Israeli soldier as the Palestinian who threw the rock is seen (right) during fierce clashes on Tuesday following an incident in the centre of the Jewish controlled part of the city when a Palestinian was shot dead by a Jewish settler (Reuters photo)

Kuwaiti is kicked out of assembly for attack on Israel, U.S.

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Kuwaiti activist was dragged out of the parliament building here Tuesday after shouting "Death to Israel" and "Death to America" during a regular weekly meeting of the assembly.

Omar Mohammad, a founding member of a group calling itself the Committee for the Defence of Islamic Issues, was protesting Israel's "terrorist activities" in Arab East Jerusalem and America's "wrong stances" in supporting Israeli policies.

"American strategic interests are in danger because the Kuwaitis, the Gulf countries, the Arabs and the Muslims have been 'humiliated' by the American unfair, unjust, inhuman, illegitimate stances against the Palestinian peaceful people," Mr. Mohammad shouted to reporters as he was hustled out of parliament.

Mr. Mohammad, who described himself as a "simple Muslim" interested in human rights, said before his outburst that he had been refused permission by the capital governorate on Monday to hold a demonstration outside parliament.

Instead, he said he was encouraging supporters to gather inside the building against Israel's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem and the U.S. veto of a United Nations resolution calling for a reversal of the Israeli settlement policy.

While demonstrations in public places require official approval, Mr. Mohammad said he did not believe the same rules applied inside parliament.

Hamas leader loses quest to be freed and deported

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge on Monday rejected a request by Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk to get out of jail or be deported from this country.

U.S. District Judge Denise Cote said that since Israel withdrew a request that he be extradited, she has no jurisdiction over the case. Mr. Abu Marzouk is now being held on an Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) order.

Mr. Abu Marzouk's lawyer, Michael Kennedy, said the INS was holding Mr. Abu Marzouk for a hearing on whether he should be deported. He is willing to leave, but the government won't let him unless he admits he is a "terrorist," Mr. Kennedy said.

"We're saying he's being illegally detained by the U.S. government," he said. "My client is consenting to expulsion." Mr. Kennedy told Ms. Cote. "They want him to say he's a terrorist when he is not. What does he do? Spend the rest of his life in jail?"

Israel had asked for Mr. Abu Marzouk's extradition as a suspect in 10 attacks from 1990 to 1994 that killed 47 people. But Israel, indicating it did not want to worsen Middle East tensions, recently dropped that request.

Mr. Abu Marzouk, 46, is admittedly a former head of Hamas' political bureau. He has been in detention in New York since he was arrested in July 1995 after a trip abroad. He was accused of violating U.S. immigration laws.

Mr. Kennedy said one way out for Mr. Abu Marzouk may be a "nolo contendere" — no contest — plea. In that plea, the defendant does not deny or admit anything. Mr. Abu Marzouk has said repeatedly that he is innocent of the Israeli charges and that he has no involvement with the militant wing of Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for fatal bombings in Israel.

There have been reports that talks are under way among Jordan, Israel and the United States to extradite Mr. Abu Marzouk to Jordan.

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Ben Laden said to be in Kandahar

DUBAI (R) — Exiled Saudi Arabian dissident Osama Ben Laden has left Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad, where he had been living, for the southern city of Kandahar, a Saudi-owned newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The London-based Al Hayat quoted informed Afghan sources as saying Mr. Ben Laden, seen by Washington as one of the world's most significant sponsors of extremists, arrived in Kandahar on Friday after travelling by road with his family from Jalalabad.

The sources said the Taleban movement, which controls more than two-thirds of Afghanistan, "advised Ben Laden to move to live in Kandahar due to concern over his personal security."

They said Mr. Ben Laden was now living in a Kandahar house under Taleban protection. Both cities are controlled by Taleban and the sources did not say why Kandahar should be safer than Jalalabad.

Extremists claim 13 more lives in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Anti-government militants killed 13 people overnight Sunday in western Algeria in the latest of a string of massacres, newspapers reported Tuesday. The latest killings occurred in the village of Merchiche and raised the death toll from rebel violence to 114 since Thursday, the newspapers Liberte and Al Khabar reported.

Al Khabar said the militants raided Merchiche just after evening prayers, killed a number of residents by slitting their throats, stopped for dinner and then killed more, including children and an ailing elderly man.

The newspaper said the men were led by the head of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) — the most extreme of the militant organisations — for the western area, Yasser Al Akel.

The killings were neither confirmed nor denied by the authorities. The massacres by armed militants come despite a weeks-old offensive against them by security forces as the country gears up for general elections on June 5.

The extremists have been fighting the military-backed regime since the cancellation of general elections in January

1992 which the now-banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front had been poised to win. Some 50,000 people, mainly civilians, have died in the violence since then.

Spain holds suspects

Six Algerians arrested on Sunday in Valencia are suspected of links with the GIA, one of the groups waging the insurgency in Algeria, the Spanish newspaper ABC reported on Tuesday.

A spokesman at police headquarters announced that six people had been arrested for dealing in stolen cars. Three Algerians were stopped by police for driving a stolen car while the others were arrested in various houses in Valencia.

According to ABC, the suspects were carrying GIA-related documents.

Investigators are trying to establish whether the Algerians are providing support for GIA activists hiding in France by providing transportation or false passports, said the newspaper.

Many Algerian activists live in France, which has a sizeable community of nationals from Algeria, a former French colony.

Asian and European tourists visit Iraq despite warnings

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A growing number of Asian and European tourists are visiting Iraq despite public warnings or private concerns from their governments that the country is potentially dangerous.

Hundreds of Japanese, German, Austrian, Belgian, Dutch and Taiwanese tourists have visited Iraq this year to explore the ruins of ancient empires and probe the mystery around President Saddam Hussein, tour operators said.

"They want to see how people live, about their tradition and culture, and also about Saddam Hussein and what people think of him," said Takayuki Taguchi, a tour leader for Tokyo-based travel Sekai company.

Another Sekai tour leader

said business was brisk with around 500 Japanese tourists visiting Iraq since November.

But Japan, the Netherlands, and Britain — not to mention the United States — officially advise their citizens not to travel to a state where foreigners were used as "human shields" in the buildup to the 1991 Gulf war.

In London, the foreign office advised Britons "against all travel to Iraq" as "Saddam has proven that he does not respect the rights of foreigners and we can offer no consular assistance."

Taiwan, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Austria do not publicly warn against tourism in Iraq, but their consulates in Jordan privately discouraged it, or in

Belgium's case, tried to "keep an eye on" their nationals.

Austria's consul in Amman, Gunther Herbst, said he planned to study whether Vienna should consider an official warning after learning from AFP that Austrians were touring Iraq.

"It's definitely not recommended there right now," said Mr. Herbst. Foreign consulates in Amman also warned of a growing crime rate, limited medical care and poor sanitation linked to U.N. economic sanctions they support.

Nor can countries like Japan and Austria help tourists in distress since they have no permanent political representation in Baghdad and evacuation in an emer-

gency would be difficult since sanctions ban air travel to Iraq.

The French consulate in Amman was one of the rare European missions to refrain from issuing official or private advice against such tourism.

The chairman of Iraq's tourism board, Sirwan Kadir said that the warnings inhibited tourism but added the good word would soon be passed around.

"These people who come despite this discouragement soon reap the joy of discovering something different from the awful picture painted by the U.S.," he said.

Besides a contemporary life starkly different from the industrial world's, Iraq boasts 10,000 sites covering the ancient empires of

Assyria, Sumeria and Babylon as well as the Abbasid Muslim caliphate.

Most tourists here were in search of a change or "slight adventure" after growing weary of "a dictated, systemised style of life" in developed countries, he said.

The tourism trend began in 1994 with Italian and Belgian groups, said observers.

But the religious tourists who began travelling here in 1992 from Pakistan, India and elsewhere still account for the vast majority of the tens of thousands of annual visitors to Iraq, he said.

"We've had tourists since 1992 on an escalating scale," he said. But the numbers are "very small," compared to the one million foreigners who used

to tour Iraq annually before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and the tourism industry here is barely covering its costs, he added.

Such little income means there is no way Iraq can use the foreign exchange to buy weapons, he added.

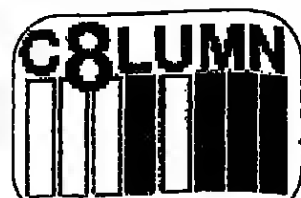
Some tourists interviewed in Baghdad said they were a little nervous about entering a country which had been bombed by a U.S.-led force supported by their governments, but felt safe once they had arrived.

"If a travel agency makes travel plans, you'd expect it to be safe," said an Austrian woman travelling with Orient Tours from Vienna and who asked not to be named. "I think the guide also wants to come back safe."

Tourists fly to Amman before travelling over a desert highway through seven army checkpoints to Baghdad or, in the case of the Japanese, fly to Kermanshah in Iran via Tehran before traveling by bus over the border.

Businessmen and journalists from Britain and many other countries in both western and eastern Europe as well as Russia, Asia and the United States also visit Baghdad.

American humanitarian and church groups have visited here, although they must avoid having their passports stamped to get around a travel ban for all Americans except journalists.



Liz Taylor divorces seventh husband

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Elizabeth Taylor is free to marry again. She's officially divorced from Larry Fortensky, husband no. 7. "It's done," the actress' attorney, Arlene Colman-Schwimmer, said Monday. The lawyer described the settlement as amicable and refused to reveal financial details. She said reports that Mr. Fortensky was getting \$1.5 million were false. "That's too high," she said. The Oscar-winning star of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Butterfield 8" met Mr. Fortensky in 1988 when both were at the Betty Ford clinic. They married Oct. 6, 1991, during a ceremony at Michael Jackson's Neverland ranch. Miss Taylor filed for divorce in February 1996, citing irreconcilable differences. Meanwhile, the 65-year-old actress is planning a trip overseas in May, two months after brain surgery to remove a benign tumor.

Latin America's 'smallest man' dies in Colombia

BOGOTA (R) — A Colombian who claimed to be the smallest man in Latin America has died in Bogota after a brief bout with pneumonia, local media reports said. Bryan Naranjo, who was 18 years old and stood just 71 centimetres tall, died of Sunday. Bogota's El Espectador newspaper said. In an interview with Reuters last June, Naranjo said he had been informed that he had won a place in the Guinness Book of Records as Latin America's smallest man. He said he wanted to work as an actor with some of the heart-throbs featured on Colombia's steamier soap operas. He also stressed that he was not necessarily looking for a dance partner or someone he could see eye-to-eye with. "I like all kinds of women," he said. "Blonds with green eyes, tall ones, and especially those who wear miniskirts so I can see their legs."

Radar keeps French barges at snail's pace

LILLE (R) — French canal police are carrying out radar checks to spot barges breaching the speed limit — of eight kph. Police said the first checks, in the north of the country, had established that most barges were speeding, sailing at up to 12 kph. Experts say speeding barges cause water swirls that damage canal banks.

NASA's top 10 reasons to bring space shuttle home

CAPE CANAVERAL (R) — Mission control offered the crew of the space shuttle Columbia some tongue-in-cheek reasons for the early end to their mission. A list of the "top-10 reasons why we are really coming home early" was faxed to the astronauts in their morning mail. Officially, a malfunctioning power generator was blamed for cutting short the planned 16-day mission and bringing it home on Tuesday. Among mission control's alternative explanations were: — The crew members forgot to do their taxes before they left and tax day, April 15, is approaching. — Hale-Bopp comet aliens got way too close for comfort. — NASA TV ratings were low. — The O.J. Simpson trial is over and CNN needs something to cover. — The crew left a stove on back in Houston. — Need to be home to see soap opera "Friends" on Thursday. — The Energiser Bunny wasn't on board.

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